

Activism and symbolic capital in Western Australia: an ethnographic study of the anti-nuclear movement

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I, Katharina Wolf, declare that this thesis, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for award of Doctor of Philosophy, Murdoch University, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

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Abstract

This study sets out to address the current gap in PR activism literature, by providing insight into one of the currently most visible activist communities in Western Australia. It investigates the social role and communication activities of activists in the context of the Western Australian anti-nuclear debate. During the period of research, February 2009 to June 2011, Western Australia (WA) was a major global supplier of natural resources, whose profits underpinned the strong economic performance of Australia during and after the 2007 global financial crisis. With worldwide demand for uranium ore (a core component required for the production of nuclear energy) increasing during this period, the state of Western Australia reversed a long held ban on uranium mining and thus found itself propelled to the forefront of the global anti-nuclear debate. This, in turn, led to the reinvigoration of the Western Australian anti-nuclear movement (ANM), which already had a more than thirty year history of protest and opposition to any use of nuclear technology. The study took place within this context, setting out to understand how WA ANM activists communicate and how they challenge the industry and economic focused discourse in WA society.

Research followed an ethnographic approach to explore the activities, interests and motivations of activists affiliated with the Western Australian anti-nuclear movement. A range of methods were employed, including participant observation for multiple, extensive periods at the movement's planning meetings and public actions; 30 interviews with ANM activists; and also qualitative document analysis of activist texts, such as flyers and brochures, plus media coverage, such as newspaper articles, online reports, and broadcast programs, including audiences' comments and consequent discussions.

Drawing on Bourdieu's theory of practice, and in particular his notion of symbolic capital, the study found that activists like those involved in the WA anti-nuclear movement lack intrinsic resources and consequently power, and therefore rely on mobilising the wider community in order to bring about change. Hence, activists' role in society is not essentially linked to campaign successes, but instead to the existence of activists and activist organisations and their ability to challenge priorities, norms and assumptions.

Knowledge about activist communications in the field of public relations has to date been dominated by a research focus on established, not-for-profit organisations with corporation-like structures, including formal public relations departments. There has been little research on social movements or fluid, informal activist groups. Also, the prevailing emphasis on the corporate perspective in relation to activism has led to previous research focusing on factors such as how companies might limit the potential damage done by activist groups. This study contributes to an understanding of grassroots activist communications from the activist perspective. The first-hand insights gained in this study challenge some of the major

assumptions about activism in the existing public relations literature, most notably the notion that 'excellent' public relations involves a compromise between activists and corporations. Instead, it finds that activists perform a crucial role in society that extends well beyond the impact of those individual companies that may be targeted during the course of an activist campaign. Furthermore, the study challenges the claims of some critical scholars that activists should be studied as public relations professionals in their own right. Instead, the research finds that there are considerable differences between the skills, resources and power of activist organisations and those of the public relations departments of corporations. Thus a comparison of activist communications and public relations is misleading and flawed within the context of PR scholarship. Activists may be expert communicators, but they are essentially powerless, and thus rely on community support in order to accumulate sufficient symbolic capital that will allow them to encourage and facilitate change.

The findings of this study have transferability beyond the context of Western Australia's uranium mining and its role in the global nuclear power supply. This thesis argues that activists play a crucial role in society because by challenging the status quo, they encourage and foster active involvement by citizens in democratic decision making. They do this not only by questioning existing power structures and priorities, but also by providing citizens with a mechanism that enables their engagement with the democratic process. By illuminating and voicing crucial societal issues, and encouraging citizens to take a stance, activists challenge the moral compass at the heart of society.

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Contents

Illustrations	10
Glossary and definitions.....	11
Chapter 1: Introduction	13
Autobiographical reflections.....	17
Chapter 2: The historical context for this study	19
The nuclear industry.....	20
The Anti-Nuclear Movement	26
The anti-nuclear movement in Australia	29
The anti-nuclear movement in Western Australia.....	34
The 1970s: marked by the silencing of public voices and a nuclear future for WA	35
1985-1990s: a focus on disarmament.....	37
Study context: the WA Anti-Nuclear Movement in early 2010	41
The Renaissance of the nuclear industry?.....	41
The power of the Australian mining lobby.....	43
The Australian media landscape.....	44
The West Australian context at the start of this study.....	45
Trouble in boom town.....	49
The impact of uranium mining on Indigenous Australia	50
Changing attitudes in Australia	51
The Anti Nuclear Alliance of Western Australia (ANAWA) in 2010.....	54
Chapter summary.....	59
Chapter 3: Literature review	61
Through the corporate lens	62
The integral role of power in activist communication	64
Compromise as a best practice strategy.....	66
Perception of activists as homogenous entities	67
US-centricity in PR scholarship.....	71
The emergence of a critical perspective in activism public relations	73
Activist literature	79
Social movement theory.....	82
Context.....	88
Societal context.....	92
Chapter Summary	95

Chapter 4: Pierre Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice	98
The central role of power	100
Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice	101
Habitus	103
Fields (“Champs”)	104
Capital	105
Economic capital	105
Cultural capital	106
Social capital	107
Symbolic capital	108
Symbolic violence	109
Chapter summary.....	111
Chapter 5: Methodology and ethical decisions	113
Philosophical stance	113
Case Study approach.....	115
Stage One: Formative research into activists in Western Australia.....	118
Stage Two: Formative research inside the WA ANM	118
Stage Three: In-depth study of the WA ANM.....	120
Challenges of my case.....	122
Data collection overview	123
Interviews: overview	125
Participant observation: overview	127
Building and maintaining trust.....	131
Written, visual and multi-media sources: overview	132
Sampling	133
Access.....	133
Sampling: Interviews	134
Sampling: Participant observation	137
Analysis	139
Issues of quality	144
Ethical considerations	145
The right of free and informed choice	146
Protection from harm.....	146
Privacy.....	147
Autonomy	147
Honesty	149

Other issues: new and social media	150
Final thoughts and reflections on my role as researcher	152
Chapter summary.....	152
Chapter 6: Humour as social capital in anti-nuclear activism.....	154
The role of humour in literature: context	155
“Naughty” actions and community building	156
Humour as educational tool	163
Carnavalesque activism: inspiring or a counterproductive strategy?.....	171
Humour as a sustainability tool	173
The role of humour in creating a collective identity.....	178
Case study: The Clown Army.....	184
There is a clown in all of us: attracting audiences	185
The clown as educator	187
Clowning as sustainability strategy	188
Towards a collective (clowning) identity.....	189
Chapter summary.....	191
Chapter 7: Networks and relationships	193
The West Australian Anti Nuclear Movement and its affiliates	193
Implications based on the model	202
Assumption of activist-corporation relationship.....	204
Perceived lack of genuine engagement.....	206
Irreconcilable differences	209
Power games: mining corporations’ agenda setting power	212
Anti-nuclear activism in action	215
Planting seeds of doubt (amongst shareholders)	216
Undermining the uranium mining agenda	222
Activists as facilitators of change	225
Beyond the manufacturing of consent	230
Chapter summary.....	232
Chapter 8: The activist role and identity.....	234
The activist ‘label’	234
Mixed feelings about the ‘activist’ label.....	236
Multiple interests and agendas	237
Activism: an individual journey	239
Transforming experiences and motivations	240

The activist family	245
A way of life	247
Us vs. them: revisiting the “activist-corporation relationship”	249
Activist roles	251
The social justice advocate	252
Social (and environmental) justice as key motivation	252
The activist as “challenger”	254
Activists as “community educators”: “join the dots”	256
The agenda setting influence of the Australian media	258
The agenda setting influence of the (mining) industry	262
“The Truth” as major strength	263
Activists as custodians	265
Activists as facilitators of a democratic society	268
The power of the community	269
Chapter summary	271
Chapter 9: Discussion and conclusion	273
Revisiting Bourdieu: The role of activism in society	273
Are activists public relations professionals in their own right?	275
To what extent is activism monolithic or diverse?	279
How do activists overcome resource discrepancies?	282
What is the role of activists in society?	284
How do activists empower citizens?	288
Implications for public relations scholarship	291
Limitations	292
Further research	293
10. Appendix	296
10.1 WA ANM: key players and affiliations (July 2009)	297
10.2 WA ANM: key players and affiliations (July 2010)	298
10.3 WA ANM: key players and affiliations (December 2010)	299
10.4 WA ANM: key players and affiliations (June 2011)	300
10.5 Sample memos	301
10.6 Formative study interview guide	312
10.7 BUMP interview guide	313
References	316

Illustrations

2.1	Development of the uranium spot price in US\$
2.2	Uranium Deposits in Western Australia
5.1	List of Phase One interviewees
5.2	List of Phase Two interviewees
5.3	List of Phase Three interviewees
5.4	List of observed actions and events
5.5	Examples of in vivo coding
5.6	Humour coding: identifying broad themes
6.1	Screenshot of Nuclear Transport Action
6.2	Photo of Beach Spill Action
6.3	Photos of the July 2010 Uranium Conference Protest
6.4	Raging Grannies at the 2010 Uranium Conference Protest
6.5	Roadside protesters at Breakfast at Barnett's on 11 th March 2011
6.6	Roadside protesters holding a Radioactive Tea Party at Breakfast at Barnett's on 18 th February 2011
6.7	Mad Hatter Float at the Fremantle Carnival, 14 th November 2010
6.8	Alice-character on top of the Mad Hatter Float at the Fremantle Carnival, 14 th November 2010
6.9	The Clown Army
7.1	Group representation within the West Australian Anti Nuclear Movement
7.2	BUMP and Anti Nuclear logo
7.3	The activism influence flow
9.1	The impact of activism in society

Glossary and Definitions

action	Public display of protest, such as a demonstration, sit in, distribution of information flyers or publicity stunt
activist	Individual, who opposes or supports a particular cause and actively seeks to have their voice heard
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ANAWA	Anti Nuclear Alliance of WA
ANFA	Australian Nuclear Free Alliance
ANM	Anti-Nuclear Movement
BUMP	Ban Uranium Permanently (campaign)
Clown Army	Group of grassroots activists that employ clowning as an means to highlight perceived shortcomings in society
FANG	Fremantle Anti Nuclear Group
GFC	Global Financial Crisis (2010)
Grassroots activism	Political or other activities that take place on a local level, based on the interests and involvement of a community, as opposed to a regional or national organisation.
ICAN	International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons
Labor Party	The Australian Labor Party
LGBTQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer
MAPW	Medical Association for Prevention of War
MP	Member of Parliament
MPI	Mineral Policy Institute
Neoliberalism	Political orientation that blends liberal political views with an emphasis on economic growth
NFP	National Disarmament Party Not for profit organisation, includes trade and industry associations, charities, churches, schools, etc.
NGO	Non-governmental organisation, e.g. Friends of the Earth, Amnesty International,

	Greenpeace
NDT	Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
NWS	Nuclear Weapon State (as recognised by the UN)
PND	People for Nuclear Disarmament
PR	Public Relations
RANG	Rockingham Anti Nuclear Group
Social Movement	A diverse group of individuals and groups with a common ideology who seek social change in relation to a particular issue
The Greens	The Australian Green Party
The Liberals	The Australian Liberal Party
US	United States of America
WA	Western Australia
WANFA	Western Australian Nuclear Free Alliance
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

Chapter 1

Introduction

This introduction provides the context of this study. Statements made in this chapter will be supported in detail in later, relevant chapters.

Activist communication represents a prominent body of knowledge in public relations scholarship and practice to date, as I argue later in the literature review. Arguably, this is no surprise. Activists can undermine the efforts of a public relations department and challenge, even threaten, the intended outcome of a communications campaign, thereby effectively undermining months and sometimes years of preparation. Western media have commonly framed activists as loud, disruptive, and even violent troublemakers. Consequently, researchers, textbook authors, and writers of practitioner 'how to' guides have predominantly positioned activists as a threat to (corporate) public relations efforts. However, over recent years, an alternative perspective has emerged in relation to activism. Critical scholars have argued that public relations has been practised long before modern corporations came into existence. Some (e.g. Coombs & Holladay, 2007; Heath & Waymer, 2009) therefore suggest that activists could – or even should - be recognised and studied as public relations practitioners in their own right.

This study developed out of a genuine interest in activists as communicators and the role they perform in modern societies. Initially attracted by the dominance of activism research in PR literature, I was surprised to discover that much of the existing body of knowledge was either a replication of earlier studies and assumptions under the auspices of the University of Maryland and the Grunig-led 'Excellence team', or built on conceptual papers and assumptions about how activists (should) communicate. As I discuss in detail in the Literature Review (Chapter 3), for almost three decades the scholarly PR community has largely continued to produce more of the same corporation-centric, issue management and damage limitation focused work, thereby essentially reinforcing the positioning of activists as a threat to effective (corporate) public relations.

Despite the emergence of a critical school of thought in public relations over the past decade, what captivated me during the early stages of my PhD journey was the lack of first-hand, emic insight into activists' perceptions of their role in society and their skills as communicators. Existing PR activism literature (e.g. Coombs, 1998; J.

E. Grunig & Grunig, 1997; M. Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001; Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009) seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of what activists do and how they do it, but intriguingly, this insight is predominantly based on observations by researchers on the outside, and commonly through a corporate lens. This literature is examined in detail in the literature review.

As a relatively young discipline, public relations is known to borrow and apply theories from related disciplines. Within the context of PR activism, this includes framing theory (e.g. Hallahan, 1999; Reber, Petersone, & Berger, 2010), stakeholder theory (e.g. Coombs, 1998), situational theory (e.g. Werder, 2006), postmodernism (e.g. Holtzhausen, 2000, 2002; Holtzhausen, 2011) and Beck's notion of a risk society (e.g. Demetrious, 2002, 2006, 2008b). However, despite its evident similarities and logical connection, the value of social movement theory has to date been largely ignored (one prominent exception is the work by Karagianni & Cornelissen, 2006).

Social movement scholars' approach to and perception of activism contrasts with that of their (traditional) public relations peers. Rather than entering research with pre-conceived ideas of activists as troublemakers—driven by the quest to find solutions to limit their impact and ultimately the damage they can afflict on corporations—social movement scholars invite activists to share their stories and motivations. Consequently, this form of research is able to provide a first-hand insight into what it means to 'do' activism. As such, social movement scholars look at activism beyond the narrow confines of the commercial sphere by appreciating and recognising wider societal implications through the eyes of active citizens.

Intrigued by the strong interest in activism in PR scholarship, and motivated by social movement scholars, I embarked on a formative study, which included interviews with a wide range of activists, from a community group opposing a new housing development and a 'mummy crusader' lobbying against food additives, to social justice advocates and environmental activists. This early phase of my study was extremely insightful for a number of reasons; most importantly because it provided the direction for this research project. Although participants in the formative study were chosen based on their affiliation with a range of apparently unconnected causes, the anti-nuclear movement emerged both as a major theme and an area of increased activity in Western Australia. The West Australian Anti Nuclear Movement (WA ANM) has been prominent since the 1970s. However, a recent change in State government from a Labor to a Liberal leadership and the

reversal of a long held ban on uranium mining resulted in West Australia being described by activists from around the country as at the 'forefront in the fight against uranium mining'. There it was, my PhD topic. It emerged unexpectedly, and it took almost another year and a half before I realised that I had unconsciously personally invested in the anti-nuclear debate, as discussed later in this chapter.

The research question for this thesis is: how do WA-based anti-nuclear activists communicate, ensure their voice is heard and challenge the status quo? This thesis commences with a comprehensive background chapter that provides a detailed insight into the WA ANM, including its history and the wider context for this study (Chapter 2). This is followed (Chapter 3) by a critical discussion of the relevant literature in public relations, but also in related fields such as social movement research.

'Power', and its unequal distribution, has to date been largely ignored as a crucial factor in activists' efforts to challenge the status quo. This study draws on Bourdieu's Theory of Practice as a theoretical framework to help analyse the WA ANM's communication efforts. A particular focus has been Bourdieu's concept of 'symbolic capital'. Whilst recognising the importance of economic resources, Bourdieu argues that two further types of assets, namely cultural and social capital, add to an individual's or group's legitimacy and credibility in society. This resulting symbolic capital represents an entitlement to construct reality. Considering the prevailing lack of economic resources for most activist groups, this recognition of membership/networks and knowledge/expertise provides a useful framework to investigate alternative power resources in the WA ANM's efforts to strategically position themselves in what Bourdieu refers to as 'fields of struggle'. Bourdieu's work appears particularly relevant in this study's context due to his own role as an activist, and his vocal criticism of dominant social paradigms in 20th Century France. From his perspective, the profession of public relations exists with the sole intention of reinforcing the influence of already powerful groups, in contrast to activists' crucial role in assuring democratic processes in modern societies (Bourdieu, 1998a). His work and theoretical ideas are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

This study sets out to address the current gap in PR activism literature by providing insight into one of the currently most visible activist communities in Western Australia. It is unique within the context of PR activism scholarship in that it draws on social movement theory, applies ethnographic research techniques, and provides emic insights into the anti-nuclear debate. My main aim has been to

provide insight into the activist perspective, rather than reinforce existing assumptions. Most importantly, I wanted to investigate if activists can be considered public relations practitioners in their own right. A detailed discussion of, and rationale for, my methodology is provided in Chapter 6.

As with any thesis, this document will only ever be able to cover a carefully selected fragment of the total volume of data collected. As a qualitative researcher, I am sharing my own interpretation of the findings. I was initially motivated by the concept of activists as public relations practitioners in their own right, which, coupled with major emerging themes, shaped my findings chapters. In chapter 6, I discuss humour as a source of social capital. Humour plays a central role in grassroots activism, but may not always be strategic in relation to achieving campaign goals. This is followed by chapter 7, in which I examine the activist identity. This is driven by questions such as: What motivates activists? Why did they choose to become active in the first place? How do they perceive their own role in society? And why do they do what they do? The third and final findings chapter (8) builds on these earlier chapters, returning to the concept of activists as public relations professionals. Chapter 8 not only questions this role, but also some of the major assumptions in public relations activism scholarship to date, including the notion of a compromise between activists and corporations as a cornerstone of excellent public relations.

In Chapter 9, I conclude that WA ANM activists are skilled communicators, but question their status as PR professionals. Grassroots activists are relatively powerless and rely on the gradual accumulation of social capital. They depend on community support and endorsement to facilitate change. Due to the severe resource and skills discrepancies of activist organisations, the comparison of activist communication and (corporate) public relations is essentially misleading and flawed, if one intends to use this comparison to inform PR scholarship. However, I argue that activists perform a crucial role in society that reaches well beyond the focus on challenging corporations' license to operate. From this perspective, the WA ANM is less about resisting uranium¹ mining, nuclear energy or proliferation, but instead about encouraging social justice, equal opportunities and a functioning democracy. No matter if individuals agree with their position or not, activists challenge the status

¹ Uranium is a naturally occurring radioactive metal which is common in rock, soil and water. In some rocks uranium is present in larger amounts and these can be mined to extract the uranium. Many contemporary uses of uranium exploit its unique nuclear properties, using it as fuel for nuclear reactors, the explosive material for nuclear weapons, or for medical treatment and research.

quo, question assumptions, and challenge citizens to re-assess their own beliefs. In doing so, they empower society and facilitate democratic decision-making.

Autobiographical reflections

Pierre Bourdieu questions the notion of objective ethnography, arguing that as researchers we always bring elements of ourselves into the study. He therefore highlights the need to clarify the researcher's own thoughts, positioning and practice in relation to the field of study (see e.g. Bourdieu, 1988). In the context of this study, his notion of "participant objectivation" (Bourdieu, 2003) encouraged me to reflect on my own relationship to the subject of study, i.e. the anti-nuclear movement. The focus for this study was initially chosen due to my scholarly interest in activist communication, coupled with identifying the WA ANM as a 'hub of increased activity' during an early formative study into activism in Western Australia. However, on reflection, as I became involved, engaged in actions, conducted interviews and established friendships, I increasingly overlooked my own background, education and worldview, which I was inevitably drawing on to make sense of the research setting. As Rabikowska (2010) concluded at the end of her research into street life in London, "the presence of the researcher and her own autobiography affect the results of research [.....] articulation as much as execution of research is always subjective" (p. 58). Consequently, it is crucial that I disclose and comment on relevant past experiences and past orientations that are likely to have shaped my interpretations and approach to this study (Daymon & Holloway, 2011).

My education and background emerged as two key factors that impacted on both my study design and interpretation of findings. Despite working in a largely positivism-orientated business faculty, my undergraduate education in media, cultural and communication studies influenced the methodological choices of the research, as well as my interest in the activist perspective. Additionally, my industry experience in public relations tempted me to underestimate the movement's communication and strategic abilities, predominantly based on their lack of subject-specific terminology and sophisticated tools. Based solely on interviews and observation of public events, there was the possible temptation to dismiss the notion of activists as communication experts in their own right. The complexity of their actions only emerged as the result of intense participation and reflection on my experience within the movement.

An invitation to “share my story” about 16 months into my study unexpectedly made me aware that my connection to the movement may have been stronger than initially anticipated. Growing up in 1980s Germany, I had witnessed the widespread fear that drifted across Europe as a result of the 1986 Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant explosion in the Ukraine. This eventually resulted in the emergence of a very vocal German anti-nuclear movement. As such, I arguably had been in closer contact with the nuclear industry than most Australians; a fact I remained unaware of for a crucial part of my data collection. More of these personal reflections are shared in the Methodology Chapter.

The following chapter provides a detailed overview of the WA ANM’s history and the wider societal, environmental and political context at the time of commencement of this study.

Chapter 2

The historical context for this study

In order to comprehend how West Australian anti-nuclear activists communicate and endeavour to overcome power challenges in order to challenge the status quo—as well as the power of nuclear lobby—it is crucial to outline the economic, political and socio-cultural context of the research setting. This chapter provides the historical context for this study by providing insight into more than three decades of anti-nuclear activism in Western Australia and the position of WA ANM activists within the global movement. Particular attention is given to the movements' position and context at the commencement of this study in 2009/2010. This is contrasted with an in-depth insight into the commercial and political context of the nuclear industry, commencing with the emergence of nuclear weapons and concluding with the strategic positioning of nuclear power as a solution to global warming, and in response to pressures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Western Australian anti-nuclear movement (WA ANM) has been a prominent voice in Australian politics and social commentary for over four decades. Emerging out of the global mass demonstration movement in the 1960s, the WA ANM became particularly prominent in the late 1970s, when the State was positioned as the future nuclear powerhouse of Australia. At that time, the ANM represented the voices of thousands of West Australians, who were strongly opposed to nuclear energy, but prevented from being heard in public forums due to legal restrictions and a fear of professional as well as personal ramifications. Acting as a catalyst, the movement united thousands of like-minded West Australians on the streets of Perth. Based on historically strong public opposition to both uranium mining and the use of nuclear energy in Australia, in particular in Western Australia, the movement has traditionally seen itself as representing the majority of West Australians. However, as this chapter illustrates, the WA ANM faces a number challenges, including the presumed revival of the nuclear industry, which has strategically positioned itself as a potential solution to global warming. Other challenges include a decrease in public opposition to uranium mining, as well as structural changes within the movement itself.

The anti-nuclear movement has a long-standing history. Worldwide, there is a plethora of organisations that focus on the prevention of uranium mining, the

limitation of nuclear energy, and an end to nuclear warfare. The anti-nuclear movement (ANM) promotes an end to the entire nuclear cycle (i.e. uranium mining, the use of uranium for nuclear energy and weapons, and the storage of radioactive material), based on the premise that uranium is “only safe if it is left in the ground” (e.g. Anti Nuclear Alliance of Australia (ANAWA), 2009b; Richmond, 2009). This study provides an in-depth insight into how the WA anti-uranium movement uses communication tools, techniques and strategies to ensure their voice adds an alternative perspective to those of the mining industry and State Government. The case study is set within the context of the 2010 Global Financial Crisis, a time during which Western Australia was entering another mining boom. The critical analysis of the real time development of the anti-mining and anti-nuclear energy campaign has the potential to provide the researcher with insights into the activist perspective as the issue evolves. This chapter provides an overview of the WA anti-nuclear movement from its conception until the commencement of the major phase of data collection in late 2010. This is set within the historical context of the global movement and contrasted with the international, multibillion-dollar uranium mining and nuclear energy industries. This context provides the basis for this study, and a justification for the focus on the WA anti-nuclear movement and study design.

This chapter begins with a brief background about the development of the nuclear industry, which is vital in order to understand the movement’s opposing voice.

The nuclear industry

Weapons production and nuclear power have historically been entwined in ways that have given the industry special privileges and status (Doyle, 2011). Prior to the Second World War, uranium was primarily mined for its radium content (Goldschmidt, 1989). However, mining efforts were stepped up towards the end of the war, as a result of military demands for uranium, in what was widely referred to as the Manhattan Project (Holmes, 2005b; International Atomic Energy Agency, 2004). This resulted in an international race to build the first atomic bomb (World Nuclear Association, 2009d). By the end of this study, nuclear weapons had only been used once in global warfare; during the US bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 (Holmes, 2005a). However, citizens of several countries, including Australia, have been affected by nuclear weapons, most notably via tests conducted on their home soil (Grabosky, 1989). For example, British nuclear weapons testing in 1955 and 1963 resulted in the loss of Australian Aboriginal lives and the contamination of their land. Rapid investment in nuclear weapons shaped

the Cold War and to date at least seven countries have successfully conducted nuclear weapons tests. However, in 2010, only five of these nations were recognised as Nuclear Weapons States (NWS) (the United States of America, Russia (successor state of the Soviet Union), the United Kingdom, France and China), an internationally recognised status conferred by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). These five countries were coincidentally also the only five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (United Nations Security Council, 2010). However, the interest and investment in nuclear weapons has reached much further. India, Pakistan and North Korea were not covered under the NPT, but nevertheless conducted nuclear tests (C. W. Hughes, 2007; Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, 2010; World Nuclear Association, 2010e). Israel, another non-signatory, was widely believed to possess nuclear weapons (Waltz, 1981). Equally, Iran's nuclear ambitions gained much political and media attention in the early 21st century (Chubin, 2006), whilst "Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction" were widely stated as the main reason for the United States-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Butler, 2001; Wedgwood, 2003), although none were ever found.

The nuclear industry has developed in tandem with an overall critique of modernity and the rise of green politics and sustainability discourses. In 1996, the International Court of Justice declared almost unequivocally that nuclear weapons were in contradiction of human rights (Matheson, 1997; Stephens, 2001). Nevertheless, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) estimated in 2010 that there were approximately 23,300 nuclear weapons in the world, which they argued pose "a direct and constant threat to global security and human survival" (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, 2010, <http://www.icanw.org>).

A key justification for the mining of uranium has been the need for nuclear power to meet the continuously increasing worldwide demand for electricity, rather than the manufacturing of weapons. The nuclear industry gained international attention as a result of a number of high profile incidences: the near meltdown of the Three Mile Island nuclear reactor in Pennsylvania, US, in 1979 and a second major reactor incident in 1986, this time in Chernobyl in the former Soviet Union.² The nuclear industry has continuously emphasised the relatively limited number of human casualties as a result of the Chernobyl explosion (the World Nuclear Association,

² This chapter provides the context for this study prior to the commencement of the major data collection phase. A third major nuclear incident at the Japanese Fukushima Daiichi plant in February 2010 is discussed in the second half of this thesis.

2010b, quotes the number of directly accountable deaths at 30). A study by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN Development Programme and the World Health Organisation states that although fewer than 50 lives were claimed in the immediate aftermath (Radford, 2005), about 4000-5000 people could eventually die as a result of exposure to radiation (Kinley, 2006; World Health Organization, 2005, 2006). These figures contrast sharply with statistics provided by environmental organisations. For example, a scientific report commissioned by Greenpeace in 2006 emphasised the potential for a quarter of a million cancer cases, estimated to result in nearly 100,000 fatal cancers (Greenpeace International, 2006).

Arguably, the Chernobyl incident in particular has resulted in irreparable damage to the image of the nuclear industry. Consequently, worldwide support for nuclear energy declined, with the majority of new reactor projects either being cancelled or suspended (Carr, 2012). This in turn had an impact on the global demand for uranium ore, causing market prices to fall (International Atomic Energy Agency, 2004). Coal became a cheaper and safer energy alternative. Subsequently, the nuclear industry experienced a slow, but widely perceived as 'inevitable', death (Wheeler, 2007). In fact, Doyle (2011) argues that civilian nuclear power had never been a cheap source of energy due to construction and running costs, combined with the continuing 'problem' of nuclear waste storage. Essentially, at the end of the 20th century, the nuclear industry was officially in decline.

In the lead up to this study, however, the ailing industry was thrown, somewhat unexpectedly, a lifeline. Despite the surrounding controversy, its shortcomings and negative publicity, the global community experienced a resurgence of governmental interest in nuclear energy as an alternative and reliable power source that spread from Australia (Stehlik, 2010), to the US (Maher, 2010; Wald, 2010), and across to Europe (Connor, 2009; France 24, 2009). With the help of in-house public relations experts and lobbying efforts, the nuclear discourse over the past decade has strategically positioned nuclear energy as affordable and safe, as well as a low carbon response to the imminent threat of global warming (Bickerstaff, Lorenzoni, Pidgeon, Poortinga, & Simmons, 2008; World Nuclear Association, 2009b, 2009c). The following section provides a detailed insight into the historical development of the nuclear industry in the lead up to this study, commencing with a brief overview of nuclear energy.

Nuclear power is produced from controlled, i.e. non-explosive, nuclear reactions. Electric Utility reactors heat water to produce steam, which in turn is used to generate electricity. The first fully commercial power plant was set up in 1960 in the United States, and was immediately followed by investments in Canada, France and the Soviet Union (World Nuclear Association, 2009d). At the commencement of this study, around 15% of the world's electricity was derived from nuclear power (World Nuclear Association, 2010g), a figure which has been described as relatively stable since the 1980s (International Atomic Energy Agency, 2008; World Nuclear Association, 2009d). This power originated from 436 commercial nuclear power plants, operating across more than 30 countries (World Nuclear Association, 2010f). However, some countries' dependency on nuclear power has been much higher. For example, in 2010 France procured over 75% of its electricity from nuclear energy (World Nuclear Association, 2010d).

However, since the 1980s only a small number of new reactors had been commissioned. In 2010, the World Nuclear Association estimated that 60 reactors were under construction (World Nuclear Association, 2010g). A further 131 were on order or planned and 278 had been proposed (Towie, 2010). Despite these considerable planning efforts, no new reactors have been connected to the power grid for decades (Bradford, 2010). Furthermore, despite an upwards revision of its nuclear power projections by the International Atomic Agency, and major investments by "key countries" such as China and India, the nuclear "share of global electricity generation" started to decline by the end of the 20th century (International Atomic Energy Agency, 2008). Whilst developing countries such as Iran, Indonesia, India and China (Shin, 2000; World Nuclear Association, 2010c) were looking to nuclear energy as a solution to meet rapidly growing energy demands, some central European countries announced increased investment into alternative energy sources (such as solar and wind power in Germany and hydro-electricity in Sweden) to enable an end to their nuclear dependency (BBC, 2009). At the time of commencement of this study, both Sweden and Germany committed to phasing out nuclear power over the coming decade (Deutsche Welle, 2003). One reason for this shift away from nuclear dependency was arguably an attitudinal change, particularly amongst central European citizens. The 1970s saw a surge in environmentalism, resulting in new environmental legislation, environmental ministries and, in several countries, the founding of formal Green political parties, all of which were (and continue to be) positioned as anti-nuclear (International Atomic Energy Agency, 2004).

However, since the beginning of the 21st century, there has been much discussion about a “nuclear renaissance” (Deloitte, 2008; World Nuclear Association, 2009c). The uranium spot price peaked at US\$138 in July 2007 (Uranium Miner, 2010) (see Illustration 2.1), prompting a flurry of investment (Donville & Steffens, 2007). The new Liberal State Government of Western Australia granted a total of 46 exploration licenses before the end of 2011 (D. Mercer, 2011). In an effort to counteract the global downwards trend, the nuclear lobby strategically positioned itself as the only feasible answer to global warming (Towie, 2010; World Nuclear Association, 2009b) and promoted its products as cost effective solutions to meet future world energy demands (Wheeler, 2007).

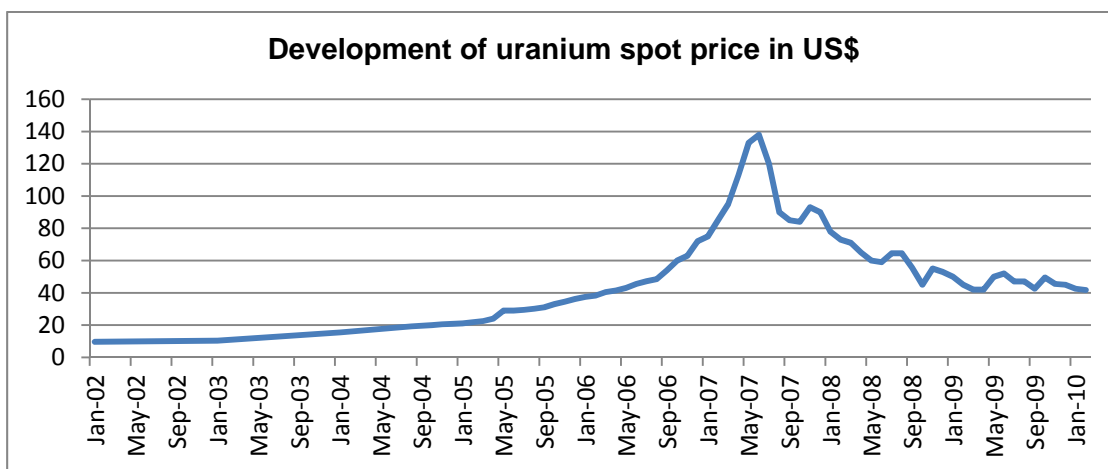


Illustration 2.1: Development of the uranium spot price in US\$
source: uraniumminer.net, accessed 20th March 2010

At the commencement of this study, around 60 per cent of the world’s supply of uranium came from mines in Canada (20.5%), Kazakhstan (19.4%) and Australia (19.2%) (World Nuclear Association, 2009e), with a select group of eight companies³ controlling 88% of the market by 2012 (World Nuclear Association, 2013). Mining methods have slowly changed from largely underground operations in the 1950s to an equal balance between open pit and underground mining in 2010. It is worth noting that most of these mine sites were not exclusively uranium operations. For example, BHP’s Olympic Dam in South Australia may have been accessing the largest global uranium reserve (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 2006), however it was predominantly classified as a copper (silver and gold) operation (H. Cooper, 2005).

³ KazAtomProm, Areva, Cameco, ARMZ – Uranium One, Rio Tinto, BHP Billiton, Paladin and Navoi.

The Australian government has traditionally demonstrated moral and political ambivalence to its nuclear production capabilities. With the exception of a nuclear research facility for largely medical purposes⁴, Australia did not have any nuclear power stations by the end of this study. However, uranium mining has represented a major revenue stream for Australia. Australian mining of uranium commenced in the 1930s, when mines at Radium Hill and Mount Painter in South Australia started to produce small quantities of radium exclusively for medical use (Deloitte, 2008). The Federal government, under the Liberal leadership of Robert Menzies, sanctioned mining for nuclear energy purposes in the late 1960s, with sites opening in Queensland and the Northern Territory (Burgmann, 2003). At the start of the 21st century, Australia was recognised globally as one of the world's major uranium exporters. According to data provided by the World Nuclear Association, Australia was home to two of the world's four largest-producing uranium mines in 2008: Ranger, owned largely by Rio Tinto, and BHP Billiton's Olympic Dam (World Nuclear Association, 2009e). In 2008-2009, Australia exported over 10,000 tons of uranium oxide with a value of over A\$1 billion (World Nuclear Association, 2010a). However, the industry's potential is much greater, as Australia has been widely recognised as possessing the world's largest uranium reserves, an estimated 23% of the known recoverable resources (World Nuclear Association, 2010a). At the start of 2010, only three mines were operating: Roxby Downs in South Australia, as well as Ranger and Nabarlek in the Northern Territory.

However, this may soon change, as the Australian Labor Party abandoned its long-standing (25 years) "no new uranium mines" policy in April 2007 (Marris, 2007; Milne, 2007). Whilst emphasising that there was no perceived need for nuclear energy in Australia, then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd justified the move by highlighting worldwide demand (Marris, 2007). This change has provided increased security and financial viability for mining companies, resulting in the immediate proposal of many more sites and government approval for two more operations (Four Mile and Honeymoon) in early 2010 (Fitzgerald, 2010). It is crucial to note that Australian States and Territories play a significant role in the regulation of mining operations in addition to Federal legislation. At the time of writing, only South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory had laws in place that allowed for the operation of uranium mines, as well as the establishment of new mines. Contrary to the national Labor Party's stance, ALP State Platforms in New

⁴ The Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) is located at Lucas Heights, 31 kilometres south-west of the Sydney central business district, NSW.

South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia prohibited the establishment of new uranium mines. In the absence of any commercial nuclear power stations in Australia, the focus has thus been solely on export.

To summarise, over the course of less than a century, the uranium industry's focus shifted from the mining of uranium for medical purposes, to the construction of nuclear weapons and finally, nuclear power. Some of the most prominent nations around the world have had highly vested interests in uranium, both as a source of domestic power to meet ever-increasing electricity demands, and as a form of international symbolic power, as part of the global arms race. However, as a result of a number of high profile incidents in the late 1970s and 1980s, the nuclear industry faced a worldwide backlash and went into rapid decline, from which many believed it would never be able to recover. Impending projects were put on hold and no new reactors were connected to the power grid. Nonetheless, demonstrating the power of strategic positioning and effective lobbying, the nuclear industry re-framed nuclear energy as affordable, safe and, most importantly, a low carbon response to the threat of global warming. The new positioning has positively impacted on uranium ore prices and boosted Australia's interest in exporting the mineral. At the commencement of this study, Australia was recognised globally as one of the world's major uranium exporters, with vast amounts of recoverable sources and Federal government support for further expansions of uranium mining operations.

Since the 1960s, the global anti-nuclear movement has publicly opposed, confronted and challenged the multi-billion dollar uranium industry. The following section provides an overview of the global movement, with a particular focus on the emergence and evolution of the movement in Australia.

The anti-nuclear movement

The anti-nuclear movement emerged as a social movement out of the global mass demonstration movement of the 1960s (Burgmann, 2003). Activists are opposed to the use of nuclear technologies during any stage of the nuclear fuel cycle. Worldwide, there is a plethora of issue-dedicated groups, such as the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. Although the initial focus of the movement was nuclear disarmament, the attention has increasingly shifted towards opposition to the use of nuclear energy. Additionally, many direct action and environmental groups, including Friends of the Earth (FoE) and Greenpeace, have identified

themselves with the movement at a local or even international level. However, it is important to note that in this context, anti-nuclear campaigns remain only one amongst many foci for these organisations, competing – internally as well as externally – for attention and funding alongside, for example, Deep Sea Destruction, Deforestation, Indigenous Land Rights, and many more.

Anti-nuclear groups argue that nuclear energy poses a number of threats to humans and the environment. These include health risks and environmental damage due to exposure during uranium mining, processing, and transport; the risk of nuclear weapons, warfare and exposure to radiation; and finally, the yet unsolved challenge of nuclear waste storage. Open pit mining has in particular attracted the attention of activists, who have raised concerns about the potential for radioactive dust to travel thousands of kilometres across the country (Roberts, 2009). Additionally, uranium mining has a direct impact on Indigenous land rights, as many deposits are located in remote areas, where Indigenous people have the potential for greater access to their land. Anti-nuclear activists maintain that contrary to the framing of nuclear energy by the nuclear lobby as a means through which to mitigate climate change, it is not an emissions free solution. Activists emphasise the strong reliance on water, which is largely ignored within pro-uranium discourses, as well as the contribution of the mining process, transportation and storage costs to carbon emissions. A thorough analysis and critique of the data provided by the pro-nuclear lobby is perceived as a crucial element of the anti-nuclear argument (see e.g. Beljac et al., 2005). From this perspective, nuclear energy is costly and dangerous or, in the words of anti-nuclear activists, “an expensive way to boil water” (e.g. Siewert, 2007, speech).

Despite frequent criticism by the media and the industry that the anti-nuclear movement primarily draws on emotive arguments to gain support (e.g. ABC News, 2010a; Granger, Symons-Brown, & Jones, 2010; Kelly, 2010), structured anti-nuclear campaign work is commonly characterised by a reliance on thorough scientific research, extensive statistics, and well evidenced arguments. Whilst images of protesters chained to gates and rail tracks, aiming to prevent nuclear waste transports between Germany and France, ensure coverage on the evening news around the globe (e.g. AFP, 2011a), campaign organisers, particularly within larger organisations such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth (FoE), draw on extensive research knowledge and expertise provided by industry reports and academic sources. In fact, a number of activists have turned their passion into an academic career, and are frequently called upon to provide scientific support and

validation for anti-nuclear arguments. For example, Jim (James) Green is a national anti-nuclear campaigner with Friends of the Earth and regular media commentator (e.g. Green, 1998; Green, 2005), in particular on nuclear waste issues. He completed his PhD in Science and Technology studies at the University of Wollongong, analysing the New South Wales based Lucas Height research reactor (Green, 1997), Australia's only nuclear reactor. Another prominent figure has been Dr Helen Caldicott, a trained physician, Nobel Peace Prize nominee, author and outspoken anti-nuclear commentator, who divides her time between Melbourne, Australia and Washington, D.C. (Caldicott, 2006). In *Nuclear power is not the answer to global warming or anything else*, Caldicott draws on the knowledge gained during 38 years of international campaign work, focused on the medical, environmental, political and moral consequences relating to nuclear weapons, power and waste (Caldicott, 2006).

Public concern about nuclear weapons emerged in the 1950s, following extensive nuclear testing in the Pacific region (Grabosky, 1989; Hacker, 1994; D. S. Meyer, 1995) and in South Australia (Maralinga). This provoked concerns about the safety of nuclear power (Gyorgy, 1979). Two international events arguably contributed to the rapid growth of the anti-nuclear movement during the late 1970s and early 1980s: firstly, the killing of the US anti-nuclear activist Karen Silkwood in 1978, followed a year later by the near meltdown of the Three Mile Island nuclear reactor in Pennsylvania, US (Kearns, 2004). These events highlighted the potential dangers associated with nuclear energy (Gyorgy, 1979) and consequently exacerbated a drop in public support for nuclear power, particularly in the UK and the US (Doyle, 2011). Secondly, the 1986 major reactor incident in Chernobyl, in the former Soviet Union, is arguably one of the most widely recalled environmental disasters globally. The reactor meltdown and its repercussions seriously damaged public support for nuclear energy throughout Europe and beyond, resulting in a widespread suspension of the construction of new power stations. Until today, strong links remain between the Chernobyl victims and anti-nuclear groups (Anti Nuclear Alliance of Australia (ANAWA), 2009a; Greenpeace International, 2010; Macy, 2007).

At the start of the 21st century, the anti-nuclear movement has been particularly vocal in central Europe, where key leaders pledged an end to a reliance on nuclear energy. For example, in 2002, Germany's ruling coalition of Social Democrats and Greens passed a law that stated all of the country's 17 nuclear power plants were due to go offline by 2021 (Deutsche Welle, 2003). In early 2010 this date was

reviewed, attracting widespread criticism by the anti-nuclear lobby and mobilising mass rallies by wider support networks (Gerhardt, 2010). Other European countries, such as Austria, Denmark, Greece, Ireland and Portugal, equally remain strongly opposed to nuclear power (*The Economist*, 2011) .

The anti-nuclear movement in Australia

The following section provides an historic insight into the emergence and development of the anti-nuclear movement in Australia, from mass demonstrations against nuclear testing in the Australian Outback, to the new challenges faced by the WA movement during the first decade of the 21st century. Much of the historic insight into the Australian anti-nuclear movement relies on archived newspaper articles and self-authored accounts, such as interviews with key activists in Kearns' (2004) *Stepping Out for Peace: A History of CANE and PND (WA)*. Social movement literature, such as Burgmann's (2003) *Power, profit, and protest: Australian social movements and globalisation*, has equally provided useful, first-hand insights.

In addition to nuclear energy, nuclear testing, and uranium mining and export have frequently been the subject of public debate in Australia. Australia's involvement with nuclear weapons pre-dates its involvement with uranium mining. In 1952 the Liberal government, under the leadership of Robert Menzies, passed legislation that provided the British government access to remote parts of the country for nuclear testing (Lowe, 1999). Most of these tests took place around Maralinga in South Australia in the mid-1950s to mid-1960s. The isolation of the location and the secrecy surrounding the tests meant that the full legal, political and health implications of the testing program took decades to emerge (see e.g. P. A. Burns, Cooper, Lokan, Wilks, & Williams, 1995; Haywood & Smith, 1992), with a Royal Commission investigation into the severe after-effects from radiation amongst the local Indigenous population only taking place in 1984 (Holmes, 2005b). In the 1960s the US government established a network of military bases throughout Australia, which have equally attracted criticism over the past decades (Kearns, 2004), particularly relating to the use and testing of nuclear weapons (Green, 1998). Protests against permission for American nuclear warships to enter Australian ports have also continued well into the 21st century (e.g. 'kimk', 2009; Cardy, 2009).

In the late 1960s, the world was in the grip of the Cold War, the Cultural Revolution was raging in China, the United States and its allies were fighting in Vietnam; the world was in turmoil, characterised by mounting fear and a lack of security. These events provided the context and motivation for millions of people worldwide to take to the streets and participate in mass demonstrations. A global anti-nuclear movement emerged, and Australia was no exception. Thousands took to the streets in peace marches, motivated by what was perceived at the time to be the imminent danger of nuclear warfare (Kearns, 2004).

A more structured Australian anti-nuclear movement formed in the early 1970s, when France commenced its nuclear testing in the Pacific Region. This was followed by an increased focus on uranium mining in the late 1970s (Green, 1998). Influenced by memories of the Hiroshima bombings, opposition to uranium mining, exports, and nuclear weapons, groups developed simultaneously across all States into what Burgmann (2003) refers to as “a significant political mobilisation” from the mid-1970s onwards. A national inquiry into the mining of uranium, resulting in what is known as the Fox Report (Ranger Uranium Environmental Inquiry, 1976), and a subsequent document in May of the following year (Ranger Uranium Environmental Inquiry, 1977), provided new fuel for the anti-nuclear movement. They offered “scientific expert support for the arguments against uranium mining” (Burgmann, 2003p. 172), by stating that the industry was “unintentionally contributing to an increased risk of nuclear war” (quoted in Kearns, 2004, p. 17). In early 2010 these reports provided the “foundation for current policy on uranium mining in Australia” (Parliament of Australia, 2003).

In the first chapters of her book, Kearns (2004) provides a detailed history of the anti-nuclear movement’s development in Australia and the emergence of a wide range of sub-groups. Most of this insight is based on her own experience with the movement as well as interviews with key activists. The following paragraph provides a brief overview of key developments. Kearns claims that by 1977, the anti-nuclear lobby had developed into a mass movement with a wide network of local groups, that frequently demonstrated. The National Uranium Moratorium Campaign (NUMC), a coalition of mostly anti-nuclear groups from around the country, loosely coordinated these groups. The main aim of the campaign was to delay uranium mining by five years, during which time more evidence about the effects of radioactivity could be collected. Another major group in this period was WAUM (Women Against Uranium Mining), supported, like the Moratorium, by the Australian Labor Party (ALP). The Uranium Moratorium was replaced by the Movement

Against Uranium Mining (MAUM) in 1979, which acted as a national umbrella organisation for a wide range of interest groups from around the country. Other groups at the time were the Coalition for a Nuclear Free Australia (CNFA), a coalition of 79 organisations, unions, anti-nuclear, environment centres and Friends of the Earth groups from around Australia (Kearns, 2004), and the Australian Coalition for Disarmament and Peace. At the same time, People for Nuclear Disarmament (PND) groups were established around the country, inspired by the UK's Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). In his brief history of the anti-nuclear movement, Green (1998) provides insight into the size, complexity and fluid nature of the movement, referring to "more than 100 local groups opposed to the nuclear industry" in the State of Victoria alone. Nationally, 'Palm Sunday', or Peace Rallies attracted up to 250,000 demonstrators (*National Times*, 4-10 May, 1984) in the early 1980s. Some authors cite numbers of up to 350,000 people taking to the streets across the country (Murray, 2006; Wittner, 2009). In summary, nuclear issues were at the forefront of the Australian consciousness, anti-nuclear activism was widespread and attracted mainstream appeal. Global events in the 1970s and 1980s, namely the killing of US anti-nuclear activist Kareen Silkwood and the two reactor incidents at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, ensured that the movement maintained its relevance and momentum, further fuelling its rapid growth (Kearns, 2004).

Burgmann (2003) asserts that during the 1970s and 1980s, the anti-nuclear movement in Australia was particularly characterised by the involvement of the union movement and the support of the Australian Labor Party (ALP). In his history of the anti-nuclear movement, Falk (1982) further argues that it was primarily the threat of escalating union action that pressured the then Fraser government into delaying plans for the export of uranium. Strikes, blockades, the refusal to handle uranium and the stoppage of shipments characterised the coming years. However, not all unions were opposed to the mining and export of uranium. The Australian Workers Union (AWU) in particular made a stance by volunteering replacements for those workers crucial to the uranium industry (McClausland, 1999, quoted in Burgmann, 2003). The movement's alignment with the Labor Party soured in 1982, when the ALP conference overturned its anti-uranium policy in favour of a "one mine policy" (Burgmann, 2003). Two years later this was upgraded under Bob Hawke's leadership to a "three mine policy" (Kearns, 2004). Labor's decision to change its position on uranium mining resulted in the formation of a new political party, the Nuclear Disarmament Party (NDP), founded by the Canberra doctor and peace

activist, Michael Denborough. Candidates included the Midnight Oil rock singer Peter Garrett and the former Victorian ALP senator, Jean Melzer. Despite its single issue focus, the NDP received 7.23% of the total votes in the 1984 federal elections, once more emphasising the widespread opposition to uranium mining across the country. However, only one of the NDP candidates was elected to the senate: the West Australian peace activist Jo Vallentine, then a young mother of two. This considerable initial success was arguably a result of a political situation (Warhurst, 1985) that was shaped by the Cold War and the perceived threat posed by the actions of the US government under the leadership of Ronald Reagan (Kearns, 2004). The NDP soon experienced internal difficulties, with all three of their candidates walking out of the national conference and resigning from the NDP within twelve months, based on concerns about hidden political agendas (MacLellan, 1985). However, despite signalling the slow death of the NDP, these events were a major catalyst behind the formation of the Australian Greens (the Australian Green Party) in the early 1990s (S. Bennett, 2008; Miragliotta, 2010; Turnbull & Vromen, 2006).

Two further events revived the national debate around the nuclear cycle. In the mid-1990s the French government resumed a series of nuclear tests in the South Pacific Region, resulting in “an angry response from many sections of Australian Society” (Burgmann, 2003, p. 177). Actions included the writing of thousands of letters to the French government through schools and community centres, as well as sponsored advertisements on behalf of the medical association in Parisian papers. However, with boycotts against French goods (Ettenson & Klein, 2005) and union bans on French planes and ships entering Australia, Grenfell (2001, quoted in Burgmann, 2003) argues that the “potential of the campaign to focus on environmental consequences of uranium mining and nuclear weapons was weakened by the degree of anti-French sentiment” (p. 178).

Tension flared once again when following the election of the Howard Liberal Coalition government in 1996, the Jabiluka mine was approved by both the Federal and the Northern Territory Governments, despite strong opposition from the Australian public (BBC World Service, 1998). Situated in the Kakadu National Park, Australia’s first registered world heritage site, and legally on Aboriginal land, the construction was eventually abandoned. In her history of the anti-nuclear movement in Western Australia, Kearns (2004) attributes Rio Tinto’s decision to close the site to the work of activists from around the country. However, Grenfell (2001) is slightly more sceptical about the actual reasons behind the closure. He argues that

following the Chernobyl reactor incident, the reason that finally determined the fate of the mine was the fall in uranium prices and receding market demand, rather than the environmental movement.

Anti-nuclear campaigners, like any activists, are aware that they are operating in a constantly changing political environment. The long-standing John Howard-led Coalition government entered the 2007 federal elections with a pro-nuclear platform, promoting nuclear energy on environmental grounds. This stance was backed by two major reports: an extensive document produced by the House of Representatives' Standing Committee on Industry and Resources' (2006), with the telling title "Australia's uranium—greenhouse friendly fuel for an energy hungry world", and what is widely referred to as the "Switkowski Report". The Howard government appointed Dr Zygmunt (Ziggy) Switkowski, the former Chief Executive Officer of Telstra Corporation, with a PhD in nuclear physics from the University of Melbourne and an outspoken supporter of nuclear energy, as Chairman of the Taskforce. This move arguably premeditated the outcomes of this "comprehensive review of uranium mining, value-added processing and the contribution of nuclear energy in Australia in the longer term" (Switkowski & Uranium Mining Processing and Nuclear Energy Review Taskforce, 2006, p.1). Among others, Switkowski's findings emphasised the merit of establishing and operating Australian nuclear power plants by 2016 (Nuclear power in Australia within 10 years: Switkowski *Sydney Morning Herald*. Nov 26, 2006). However, these findings were not widely supported amongst the Australian public, with a poll by *The Weekend Australian* indicating that support for the construction of nuclear power plants on Australian soil had decreased to 35% of voters (Lewis & Kerr, 2006). This further encouraged a wide range of activist groups to lobby against nuclear energy, and in particular the generation of waste at all stages of the nuclear fuel cycle. During this time, Australians witnessed the emergence of a new type of activism: organised online advocacy. Inspired by the US based MoveOn.com and the global Avaaz.org, GetUp, an independent, virtual, grassroots community advocacy group emerged, with the aim of giving "everyday Australians opportunities to get involved and hold politicians accountable on important issues" (GetUp, 2010). GetUp is a multi-issue group that actively lobbied against the re-election of the Howard government alongside the anti-nuclear movement.

This section has highlighted how anti-nuclear sentiment has traditionally been deeply engrained in the Australian psyche. Despite continuous efforts by both

industry and consecutive governments to introduce uranium mining and nuclear power, major projects have failed to gain momentum or even been unable to move beyond the initial approval processes. This may be due to continuous support by the wider public for anti-nuclear activism. However, as discussed, there has been a shift from strict mining bans to the introduction of first a one mine, then a three mine, and finally, a no limitation policy (Grattan & Fitzgerald, 2009; Milne, 2007). Equally, in line with international development, nuclear power has gained increased attention and publicity as a 'low emission' alternative to coal and an answer to global warming (Nason, 2010; The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia. House of Representatives. Standing Committee on Industry and Resources, 1996; Towie, 2010).

The anti-nuclear movement in Western Australia

The focus of this study is the West Australian anti-nuclear movement. Although its development has been broadly in line with global and national events, it is particularly important to take local cultural, environmental, social and political factors into account. This section provides a brief overview of the WA anti-nuclear movement from its early days until the commencement of this study in 2010. Western Australian anti-nuclear campaigners joined the rest of the country when the nuclear movement gained momentum in the mid-1970s. According to Martin (2007), nuclear power was "a big issue in Australia, probably the biggest environmental issue of the period" (p. 43). The Campaign Against Nuclear Energy (CANE) was loosely formed around predominantly student and union representatives (Kearns, 2004). During this time, the Federal Whitlam Government decided to provide funding for an "Environmental Centre" in each State. The Perth Centre immediately became the obvious base for activists from many backgrounds. As a result, the anti-nuclear movement was strongly interlinked with other environmental issues, such as the high profile Save our Native Forest campaign (Kearns, 2004). Although the centre has since closed, this strong support across (environmental) groups and issues is still present today and played a vital role in the establishment of the Australian Green party in the 1990s (S. Bennett, 2008; Lohrey, 2002; Miragliotta, 2010).

In the early 1980s, Martin (1982a) described the Australian anti-nuclear movement as relatively decentralised, arguing that decisions about campaigning were predominantly made in local groups, whilst strategic directions and major events

were coordinated via national meetings. Perth, the capital of Western Australia, is recognised as one of the most isolated metropolitan areas in the world (Fatovich & Jacobs, 2009; Houghton, 1990). Its geographical isolation and relatively small 'pool' of potential activists have arguably shaped the WA anti-nuclear movement. Particularly during the early days, the cost of travel and communication limited activists' opportunities to participate in national organising and planning meetings, which usually took place on the east coast of Australia (Kearns, 2004). Consequently, despite being part of a larger movement, Western Australian activists developed their own style, strategies and ultimately, their own identity. Activist accounts in Kearns' (2004) history of CANE and PND (WA) emphasise the close nature of the group and convey how the WA movement has traditionally expressed opposition in different ways than their interstate counterparts. Whilst activist groups and public demonstrations are frequently stereotyped by crowds figured as violent, emotional, and aggressive (McFarlane & Hay, 2003), the WA movement emphasised its spiritual connection to the environment, as well as non-violence and dedication to gradual change, provision of information, and advocacy (verbal accounts by WA ANM activists, obtained as part of this study and discussed further in later chapters where the data is presented). Throughout Kearns' historic account, past and current anti-nuclear activists highlight their strong commitment to social justice, human rights and non-violent protest, which is credited to the relatively high representation of women in the movement's key leadership roles (Kearns, 2004). The following paragraphs provide an overview of the WA anti-nuclear movement's history and development from the 1970s until the beginning of 2010.

The 1970s: marked by the silencing of public voices and a nuclear future for WA

Whilst the late 1960s were marked by the Vietnam Moratorium and marches across the Western world, the nuclear threat became very real for West Australians. In 1977-8, the State Government, under the leadership of Sir Charles Court, publicly announced that it was considering investment in nuclear energy (Martin, 1982b). Plans emerged that Australia's first nuclear reactor was to be built close to Perth. Western Australia was supposed to become the country's nuclear 'powerhouse' (Martin, 1984). The circumstances under which the WA anti-nuclear movement formed were largely characterised by the oppression of public opinion and individual voices. At the time, the public voicing of personal views and opinions could have serious consequences. According to first-hand reports in Keane's (2004) history of

the WA anti-nuclear movement, any civilian involvement in protests was widely perceived as a 'high risk' activity at the time, with 'activist activities' being seen as a legitimate reason to terminate employment. To further deter civic engagement, the Court government introduced 'Section 54B of the Police Act', which effectively banned public meetings by declaring gatherings of more than three people in Western Australia illegal (Bulbeck, 1983; Mayes, 2007). The ban resulted in public outcry, a number of demonstrations, and consequent arrests (Kearns, 2004).

Counteracting enforced limitations, Kearns describes 1977 as the year of mass mobilisation in WA, with crowds rapidly growing from 300 at the first anti-nuclear demonstration, to 9000 at the third protest along the Esplanade in Perth's inner city. These numbers widely exceeded the movements' own targets (Kearns, 2004). Despite public opposition, the State Government was keen to proceed with its plans and selected the first nuclear reactor site in 1979 at Wilbinga, 70 kilometres north of the capital city (Phaceas, 2010). Based on research conducted by its Energy Board, the government, led by Charles Court, predicted that at least another dozen power plants would be needed by the end of the 20th century to meet the State's rapidly growing populations' power demand (Kearns, 2004). The State Government was not prepared to expose these plans to consultation and public scrutiny. These events may be characterised as a typical example of power struggles between the political and the greater public sphere. Based on economic modelling of proposed electricity supply systems and public demand, for example, Martin (1982b) concluded that the basis for nuclear plant proposals at the time was "political rather than economical" (p. 136).

Western Australia followed the lead of other states and established a People for Nuclear Disarmament (PND) state chapter in the early 1980s (Murray, 2006). As in the rest of the country, nuclear power was a major discussion topic and a prevalent environmental issue on which nearly everyone appeared to have a viewpoint (Martin, 2007). The anti-nuclear movement had indeed moved into the mainstream, illustrated by the range of local PND groups that were being set up in both metropolitan and rural areas, from Albany to Port Headland (Kearns, 2004). While CANE was reportedly positioned as "very radical", PND's agenda was to bring together a wide range of groups, particularly at rallies (Kearns, 2004). These encompassed unions, school teachers, churches, women, and peace groups as well as medical representatives. PND's (WA) agenda was nevertheless very specific: "no warships, no bases and no uranium mining" (p. 54). During its peak, PND represented 40-50 groups and 800 individual members, resulting in a total

membership of 27,000 (Kearns, 2004, p 51). Up to 25,000 marched in the yearly Palm Sunday Rallies in Perth, in some of the largest mass demonstrations in West Australian history to date (Kearns, 2004; Murray, 2006).

The tarnished image of the nuclear industry and worldwide concern following the 1979 near meltdown of the Three Mile Island reactor may have worked in WA activists' favour. After half a decade of protest, The West Australian newspaper reported on 7 April 1983 that the WA State Government, under the now Labor leadership of Brian Burke, had abandoned its plans for a nuclear power station in WA. As nuclear energy was no longer representing an imminent threat, CANE was merged into PND, which continued its focus on nuclear disarmament (Kearns, 2004).

1985-1990s: a focus on disarmament

Following the Australian Labor Party's move to endorse a "three mine policy", WA became the first Australian State – if not the first location in the world – with a single issue senator focused exclusively on the nuclear agenda (Mulhall, 1986; Sharman, 2002). Jo Vallentine had previously been involved with CANE and PND, and was selected as the only female candidate of the Nuclear Disarmament Party (NDP). Due to internal disagreements, Vallentine left the NDP shortly after her successful election to the Senate (Adamson, 1999) and continued as an independent member of government before representing the newly formed Greens Party as Australia's first Green Senator (Frankland, Lucardie, & Rihoux, 2008). Stating health reasons, Vallentine retired from politics in 1992. However, she continues to be one of the key drivers of the anti-nuclear movement in Western Australia. At the time of writing she was Chairperson of ANAWA and an outspoken participant at a wide range of industry forums, information sessions and public actions relating to nuclear issues. In 2006 the Nobel Peace Prize nominee was named as one of Western Australia's 100 most influential people of all time by the States' daily newspaper (The West Australian, 2006). The list, developed by a committee including several eminent West Australian historians, ranked her alongside key scientists, explorers, artists and business leaders. The brief profile provided alongside her photo emphasised her tireless work as a peace activist and anti-nuclear campaigner.

With the imminent threat of nuclear reactors gone, the WA movement directed its attention towards US warships. Throughout the early 1980s, approximately 30,000

American sailors visited Western Australia on a yearly basis for rest and recreation. This corresponds to approximately three quarters of all visits of US ships to Australia (Murray, 2006). Most of these vessels were assumed to be nuclear armed and/or powered, which prompted fierce opposition to the visits. The central role played by female activists during this period of activity is highlighted in Murray's (2006) article on the history of the women's peace movement. Beyond demonstrations against American warships in Australian waters, they demanded the closure of US military camps, based on the country's endorsement of nuclear warfare. Following the 1995 French-led nuclear test, 1996 was described by Jo Vallentine (quoted in Kearns, 2004, p. 70) as a year with a number of key successes for the movement. The International Court of Justice declared nuclear weapons illegal under international law, which resulted in the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons (1996) proposing steps towards nuclear disarmament. This resulted in a Test Ban Treaty passed by the United Nations (Jonas, 2007).

In 1997 the Anti Uranium Coalition of WA (AUCWA) was formed by long-term representatives from a wide range of groups, such as the Medical Association for the Prevention of War, the Conservation Council, the Australian Conservation Foundation and Friends of the Earth. AUCWA's aim was to act as an umbrella organisation, representing a wide range of groups with an interest in the anti-nuclear agenda. With the imminent nuclear threat gone, the focus moved towards strategic planning and direct lobbying of individuals and organisations. The name of the groups was eventually altered to the Anti-Nuclear Alliance of Western Australia (ANAWA), in order to represent a wider agenda. At the commencement of this study, ANAWA still played a key role in representing the anti-nuclear community. Subsequently, WA anti-nuclear activists were heavily involved in the 1997 countrywide Peace Pilgrimage and the Jabiluka campaign in the Northern Territory (BBC World Service, 1998; Burgmann, 2003; Green, 1998), particularly during months of blockading in 1998. However, as activists in Kearns's (2004) account emphasise, campaign successes tended to be temporary. In 1999 they were once again forced to direct their attention to developments in Western Australia. An international consortium had identified Australia—in particular, the West Australian outback—as a suitable location for an international, high-level radioactive waste repository (McCombie, 1999; World Nuclear Association, 2009a). The proposal by Pangea Resources, a joint venture of British Nuclear Fuels Limited, Golder Associates and Swiss radioactive waste management entity Nagra, promised

substantial financial returns. The prospect of becoming an international “dumping ground” resulted in public outrage (McCombie, Pentz, Kurzeme, & Miller, 2000). Following strong opposition on both State and Federal levels, as well as continuous lobbying by the anti-nuclear movement, the *Nuclear Waste Storage (Prohibition) Act 1999* was passed and the project was eventually abandoned. However, the introduction of a WA based nuclear waste storage facility remains a valid threat, as globally governments struggle to find suitable solutions for the disposal of radioactive waste.

As early as 1979, Barkan questioned the strategic capabilities and impact of what he then referred to as the “contemporary” anti-nuclear movement. Has the movement been successful? Or can their achievements be largely attributed to a coincidental change in the economic environment, as suggested earlier by Grenfell (2001, quoted in Burgmann, 2003)? In his unpublished PhD thesis, *Nuclear Culture, Social Reaction: Opposition to Uranium Mining in Australia*, Muetzelfeld (1981) equally emphasised the more tactical nature of the Australian anti-nuclear movement. Referring to the National Uranium Moratorium Campaign in the late 1970s, Muetzelfeld argues that “in many ways it appeared that the groups and organisations followed the campaign rather than led it” (pp. 7, 19). This ‘tactical’ focus applied particularly within the West Australian context. As outlined above, for over three decades activists were continuously presented with new challenges: the imminent threat of nuclear warfare, weapons testing in the Australian outback, the proposal of nuclear power plants, and an increased interest in uranium mining. Each of these challenges demanded immediate action, thereby limiting opportunities to build strategic capabilities. At the beginning of the 21st century, however, this changed slightly. Without an urgent campaign focus, the remaining activists were presented with an opportunity to reflect (as seen, for example, in Kearns’ (2004) account) and become more strategic, both in terms of ANAWA’s positioning and future activities (Kearns, 2004).

Historically, the WA movement’s activities have been predominantly tactical and reactive. When the plans for a WA reactor were announced, WA’s anti-nuclear activists were reportedly prepared to “do almost anything to get media coverage” (Kearns, 2004, p. 20-25). Gaining coverage became an even greater challenge when Perth’s afternoon paper, the *Daily News*, ceased in 1990. Since then, the State has been restricted to one daily newspaper, *The West Australian*, which is characterised by its reliance on corporate advertising. Arguably, this dependency may influence editorial decisions in favour of major advertisers. Hence, the

movement has been drawn to 'creative' approaches in order to secure media coverage, a decision which arguably impacts on how activists are perceived and how core messages are acknowledged. The WA movement is artistically influenced, frequently expressing their opinions in song, dance, street theatre, and costumes as well as colourful banners and placards (Kearns, 2004; McIntyre, Sevil, & Smith, 2009; Munro, Scott, & David, 1996). Other tactics have included walks and bike rides, photo exhibitions and concerts, debates, presentations at schools, stalls at agricultural shows, community radio, petitions, letter writing, poster competitions, and quiz nights, as well as more strategic initiatives, such as the promotion of Nuclear Free Zones at local council levels (e.g. the Town of Vincent, City of Fremantle). Examples of creative executions included serving 'yellow cake'⁵ at the official launch of the BUMP (Ban Uranium Mining Permanently), the distribution of mock chequebooks outside banking institutions that fund uranium ventures, and parodies of corporate advertising campaigns. Some of these more original approaches, such as singing Smurf songs in front of the British Petroleum (BP) head office, dressing up in animal costumes (see Kearns, 2004), and enlisting the 'clown army' to perform in front of uranium mining conference delegates (Fremantle Anti Nuclear Group (FANG), 2010b), may boost morale internally and gain the desired media coverage. However, as these approaches contrast starkly with the fact-focused and corporate style of organisations and governments, the question arises as to whether these types of activities may contribute to alienating the general public and – most importantly – take attention away from the movement's key messages. The role of creative, humorous actions, and their function and impact on campaign outcomes, is investigated in more detail in Chapter 6.

In summary, developing out of the global mass protest movement, the ANM has been a prominent voice since the 1960s. During its prime in the late 1970s/early 1980s, there were hundreds of affiliated groups across Australia alone. During this period, the group focused on nuclear disarmament, fuelled by fears relating to the Cold War and nuclear weapons testing in the Australian outback. Support for the movement was furthermore increased by politicians' interest in introducing nuclear power into Australia. Defying and challenging pro-nuclear State and Federal Governments, up to a quarter of a million demonstrators participated nationally in ANM-coordinated Peace Rallies. Despite its geographic isolation, Western Australia

⁵ Yellowcake is a uranium concentrate powder obtained from leach solutions, in an intermediate step in the processing of uranium ore. The mineral is usually transported (and exported) in this form. Yellow (coloured) baked goods (i.e. cake) frequently features at anti-nuclear protests for illustration purposes.

played a prominent part in the movement, listing up to 27,000 affiliated members, and recruiting the world's first and only single-issue Senator, based on a nuclear platform. However, in the decades leading up to 2010, the movement's prominence faded as the imminent threat of warfare disappeared and supporters became absorbed in the broader Greens movement. WA based anti-nuclear activists have been involved in a number of high profile campaigns. However, as the social and economic structure of the State changed, so has the support for activists. The following section explores the economic and socio-political context of ANM at the commencement of the main phase of data collection in 2010.

Study context: the WA Anti-Nuclear Movement in early 2010

Motion and Weaver (2005) highlight the importance of placing critical research within its political, economic and socio-cultural context (p. 50). Following this argument, a movement's struggle for power can only be fully understood in relation to the challenges and opportunities it is facing at the time under investigation. This section provides a snapshot of crucial developments in the lead up to the launch of ANAWA's BUMP (Ban Uranium Mining Permanently) campaign in mid-late 2009, which was designed to counteract what Foucault would refer to as the prevailing "regimes of truth" (Foucault, 1972; 1980, p. 131), established by the West Australian Government and the nuclear industry in order to maintain and reinforce their position of power. This section sets out to provide the context for the main phase of data collection, which commenced in late 2010. The insight gained during preliminary studies enabled a better understanding of some of the complexities WA anti-nuclear activists face, allowed for the identification of opinion leaders, and hence informed the background provided in this section. The different study stages are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 (Methodology).

The Renaissance of the nuclear industry?

As discussed earlier in this chapter, towards the end of the 20th century, following the Chernobyl and Three Mile Island disasters, falling spot prices and a negative image crippled the nuclear industry. Nuclear power was presumed 'dead' (Wheeler, 2007). However, less than a decade later, as a result of continuous public relations work by the nuclear lobby, there was much talk about a renaissance of the nuclear industry (Granger, 2010; World Nuclear Association, 2009c), driven by both "concerns about energy security and climate change" (Deloitte, 2008, p. 3). As

Alan Eggers, the executive chairman of Manhattan Corporation Ltd, explains in a news article that introduces him as “uranium industry legend”:

Nuclear power is a growth industry worldwide and looking at 439 operating (nuclear power) plants, 62 under construction, 100 planned and 270 proposed, this projected growth and installed nuclear capacity we see fuelling that next storm. (quoted in Granger, 2010)

In 2010 the world community’s memories of nuclear accidents were waning, particularly in Australia. Indeed, apart from the nuclear tests in the Australian outback in the 1950s and 1960s, and French offshore testing in the 1980s, Australia is a country that has had limited exposure to the immediate consequences and potential risks of nuclear energy and uranium mining. At the start of the 21st century, the world’s attention turned towards global warming, climate change, and the need for alternative, reliable, and low carbon energy sources that could meet rising global energy demands. In the meantime, the nuclear industry used the global warming platform to re-position itself strategically as the only feasible solution to combat climate change (Towie, 2010) and meet emission targets for nations worldwide (Switkowski, 2009), without having to sacrifice standards of living. Suddenly, nuclear energy had changed its image from a dirty and dangerous energy source produced in grey and ageing concrete reactors, to a green alternative with the potential to save the planet from rising waters and extreme weather conditions (see for example Australian Uranium Association, 2009a).

By 2009, the World Nuclear Association had blamed any remaining opposition to nuclear energy on “public ignorance”, whilst emphasising improved industry standards and growing support by “a number of high profile environmentalists” (World Nuclear Association, 2009b). The pro-nuclear lobby had indeed been highly successful in their efforts, enlisting a number of well-known and respected scientists (e.g. environmental scientist Tim Flannery (2006)), global warming campaigners (e.g. former US Vice President turned environmental campaigner Al Gore, who has just stopped short of publicly endorsing nuclear energy) and even environmental organisations. In 2006, for example, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) made headlines when its Australian CEO Greg Bourne endorsed both uranium mining and nuclear power (R. Burton, 2008; Hodge, 2006; J. Taylor, 2006), thereby contradicting the WWF International Position Statement on Nuclear Power (World Wildlife Fund (WWF) International, 2003). WWF Australia was eventually forced to backtrack and has since largely removed itself from the nuclear debate. Similarly,

Patrick Moore, a founding member of Greenpeace International, commenced working as a much quoted consultant for the pro-nuclear lobby (www.greenspiritstrategies.com & www.greenspirit.com), and has been an outspoken advocate of the idea that the “environmental movement needs to update its views” (P. Moore, 2006).

As a result of public endorsements by credible, high profile organisations and individuals, the nuclear lobby had accrued significant symbolic power and cultural capital at the expense of anti-nuclear movements around the globe. This shift in public sentiment impacted on governmental decision-making. Governments, particularly in Western cultures, started to reframe nuclear power as low carbon, resulting in a turnaround by the English Labour Party (Doyle, 2011), which – alongside Germany – has revised its originally stipulated phase-out dates for nuclear reactors (BBC, 2009; Doyle, 2011; Gerhardt, 2010). Equally, by 2010, the Australian government had started to promote or at least discuss the merits of domestic power (A. Hepworth & D. Kitney, 2010; Lewis, 2010; Parker, 2010). This was particularly pertinent given that the country had never had civic nuclear power stations.

By 2010 the notion of a “nuclear renaissance” had been strongly rejected by the anti-nuclear movement. It argued that despite proposals for new reactors, actual commissioning is limited, whilst at the same time ageing sites were being shut down (e.g. Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2009). However, climate change provided the ideal platform for the pro-nuclear lobby, resulting in concerns that the nuclear debate would hijack the 2009 International Climate Talks in Copenhagen. The Copenhagen Summit was eventually hailed a failure (e.g. Vidal, Stratton, & Goldenberg, 2009), due to the lack of an international binding agreement on emission cuts. However, the bigger setback for the anti-nuclear movement came in February 2010, when US president Barack Obama, previously celebrated by the green movement as a progressive and environmentally conscious leader (Broder, 2010), announced the commissioning of two new reactors in Georgia (Wald, 2010). These would be the first new reactors to be built in the US in 30 years.

The power of the Australian mining lobby

The focus of this study is on activist communication and the notion of power. Based on Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice (1977), Western Australia can be described as a “field of struggle”, in which actors compete to maintain or challenge the status quo.

In this context, this involves the perception of and attitude towards uranium mining. The power imbalance between resource rich corporations and under-resourced activist groups, which are reliant on volunteers, arguably could not be better emphasised than within the Australian context. To illustrate this point, in 2010 the mining industry, represented by the Minerals Council of Australia, spent over A\$22million on a six week advertising and PR campaign, with the sole aim of preventing the government introduction of a 40% “resource super profits tax” (Davis, 2011). During this process the pro-mining lobby was credited for its contribution to the removal of the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd within his first term, who only earlier in the year had boasted the highest approval rating by citizens of any Australian Prime Minister in history (Cassidy, 2010). The largest contributors to the campaign were BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto (B. Mitchell, 2010), two multinational companies that had already mined uranium in other parts of the country and were highly visible in Western Australia. The mining sector was one of the largest employers in WA (Department of Mines and Petroleum, 2009), which resulted in a high profile and a close relationship with the State’s only daily newspaper, *The West Australian*.

The Australian media landscape

It would be inappropriate to consider the context of this study without briefly noting the media landscape in which WA ANM activists operate. As I later demonstrate, media relations perform a relatively minor role in WA ANM activities. It is nevertheless crucial to understand the opportunities and restrictions provided by the local media, in particular as some scholars have argued that the media may act as an indirect ally of activist organisations, by favouring storylines concerning “well loved underdogs” (e.g. García, 2011; L. A. Grunig, 1992a; Holtzhausen, 2000). The limited nature of the Australian media landscape presents activists with a number of challenges. According to the *Reporters Without Borders 2010 World Press Freedom Index*, Australia ranked 18th of 178 countries, ahead of the United Kingdom and United States, but behind most central European countries. Jones and Pusey (2008) have described Australian media ownership as being among the most concentrated in the Western world. At the commencement of this study, two newspaper groups accounted for over 90 per cent of the circulation of daily newspapers. News Limited, a subsidiary of the US based News Corporation, controlled close to three quarters of the major newspaper circulation in Australian Capital cities (68% weekdays, 78% Sundays), followed by John Fairfax Holdings,

with around 20% (Parliament of Australia, 2006). Between them, they controlled eleven of the twelve major newspapers in the country. The major exception was *The West Australian*, which in turn was the only daily publication in Australia's largest state, Western Australia. However, the three companies are co-owners of Australia's national news agency, Australian Associated Press (AAP), which distributes and sells news to other outlets, such as the government owned Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

The West Australian context at the start of this study

After more than three decades, the West Australian anti-nuclear movement was still very much characterised by the four features Barkan (1979) identified for what he described at the time as the “contemporary” anti-nuclear movement: a focus on nonviolence and civil disobedience, the use of affinity groups, and consensus style decision-making. An additional attribute has been the movement's emphasis on non-party alignment, thereby aiming to ensure access to decision makers beyond the election terms of individual governments. However, this commitment has been more theoretical than practical, due to the close relationship with the Greens Party and the union movement. Having moved well beyond the nuclear fears associated with the Cold War and weapons testing in the region, and in the absence of nuclear power stations in Australia, at the start of this study the WA ANM's focus was firmly on uranium mining (Anti Nuclear Alliance of Australia (ANAWA), 2009a).

However, despite an effort to maintain relationships with individual politicians across parties, any Federal or State Government change in leadership presents activists with new challenges; particularly when this change results in an election win by the largely industry-aligned Liberal Party, as happened in Western Australia in 2008. In September 2008, the newly re-instated State Liberal Leader Colin Barnett secured a widely unexpected win over Alan Carpenter's Labor Party (Stangley, 2008). As broadly anticipated—in particular by the mining industry (Donkin, 2008; Williams, 2008)—the newly formed Liberal-National Coalition immediately overturned the existing WA Labor government's ban on uranium mining, publicly referring to it as a key pillar in its plan to ensure the continuation of the WA resources boom (O'Brian & Hart, 2008). Coupled with the Federal Labor Party's decision in 2007 to abandon its restriction on the number of operational uranium mines in Australia, which had effectively provided the new Liberal-National government with the necessary legislative support to mine and export yellowcake from WA, the removal of the ban resulted in a flurry of investment. Eight potential sites had previously been identified

by the Australian Uranium Association (Clarke, 2008), however, exploration efforts were increased further as a result of this favourable climate, particularly as Western Australia's uranium resources were expected to be extensive. A snapshot of existing deposits is provided in Illustration 2.2, sourced the Anti Nuclear Alliance of Western Australia:

For the WA ANM, this setback came with a major, ironic twist. After years of lobbying they had been close to achieving their key goals. The outgoing Labor Government's policy platform had been broadly in line with the movement's demands, including a complete ban on the mining and export of uranium (Charles, 2009). However, not expecting to lose the impending election, WA Labor failed to sign off on the legislation before the election was called. Uranium mining did eventually become a major election issue and point of differentiation between the two major parties (Warwick, 2008), however, inadvertently, WA Labor had effectively left the door wide open for an immediate reversal of their existing policies (C. Sonti, 2008).

In order to fully understand the underlying dynamics, it is important to examine the decline of public support for the ANM and increased interest in uranium mining within the context of the socio-economic positioning of Western Australia. WA is the largest of Australia's States and Territories, covering around one third of the country. 85% of its 2.27 million-strong population lives in the south west corner of the State, with the majority based in the capital Perth (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010b, data as per 31st December 2009). 77.5% of the population is of European decent, which sharply contrasts the comparatively low representation of Indigenous Australians (3.1% according to Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007). WA's economy is largely driven by the extraction and processing of mineral and petroleum commodities. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistic's 2008 data, major export commodities, such as iron ore, alumina, nickel, gold, crude oil and liquefied gas, accounted for 36% of the nation's overseas exports. The State's high productivity is reflected on an individual level. WA's gross State product per capita (A\$70,009) is higher than that of any other Australian State or Territory, and well above the nation's average (\$A58,606). According to 2011 Census data, the median weekly family income was A\$1722 per week, compared to A\$1481 for the nation as a whole (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013). These figures indicate that during the course of this study West Australians were enjoying a relatively stable and comfortable life, which was largely supported by the mining industry. During this time, there were hundreds of mining companies in the State, including many local and privately owned operations. However, multinational companies, such as Rio Tinto, BHP Billiton and Chevron, dominated much of the activity, as well as the Australian Security Exchange (ASX) listed Woodside Petroleum. As a result of record investment and mining activity, West Australians liked to refer to themselves as the 'powerhouse' of Australia (A. Tillett, 2010) and therefore the major contributor

that helped the county avoid the 2007-2010 global recession (Rudd, 2009). Triggered by a liquidity shortfall in the US banking system in mid-2007, much of the developed world plunged into the biggest downturn for 75 years (Rudd, 2009). Not since the Great Depression in the 1930s had economies in Europe and the United States of America been presented with a combination of escalating unemployment figures, freefalling house prices and financial insecurity of this scale. Whilst at the beginning of 2010 global markets were only slowly recovering from the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), Western Australian unemployment figures remained stable at 5% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010c).

Throughout the data collection for this study, the Barnett State Government highlighted the strong economy as 'indebted' to the mining and petroleum industry, emphasising that it was "vital to the continued development and sustainability of Western Australia's economy" (Department of Mines and Petroleum, 2009, p.1). Shortly after coming into power, environmental groups criticised the government for allocating the environment portfolio to its most junior member, Donna Faragher, whilst extending the power and influence of Mines and Petroleum to Minister Norman Moore (R. Taylor, 2008). This was perceived as further confirmation that economic considerations were valued ahead of environmental concerns. The State Government came again under fire when WA's Sunday paper gained access to a number of leaked documents, outlining plans to overwrite environmental concerns. The proposal, submitted by a purposively selected industry working group, suggested an overhaul of the mining project assessment process (Van Merwyk, 2009), including the suggestion that "major and contentious developments might go ahead without needing approval from the Environment Minister" (Towie, 2009). Instead, the final decision was to be transferred to the Premier and the Minister of Mines and Petroleum.

Trouble in boom town

Western Australia did not fully escape the effects of the global financial downturn, evident from 2008. Prior to the GFC the State's employment market was characterised by a severe skills shortage, which spilled over into all sectors as mining companies were prepared to pay premium rates for their on-site and 'fly in fly out' staff. Skilled migration became a major solution to ensure the industry's requirements were met. However, this was about to change. In early 2009 BHP Billiton unexpectedly announced the closure of one of its latest projects, a nickel mine in WA's south west, in response to falling global prices for the commodity

(Bromby, 2009). Alongside 'fly in fly out' workers, 1450 local people were expected to lose their employment (S. Sonti, 2009), which in turn was expected to impact on the entire region, resulting in lost income, plummeting house prices and a dramatic decline in its local population. Whilst this was not an isolated incident of job losses during the 2007-2009 downturn in demand for Australian resources, it demonstrated the limited lifespan of the mining boom and encapsulated Western Australia's fear that their lifestyle and identity as the country's 'Boom State' might be under threat.

During these uncertain times, uranium mining presented a new and so far untapped opportunity to replace less in-demand minerals, create employment and secure the continuation of the West Australian boom. Uranium companies positioned themselves as providing local jobs, particularly in remote and isolated areas, whilst responding to the global demand for one of the largest uranium ore resources in the world (Government of Western Australia, 2009; Towie, 2010). Western Australian uranium ventures were associated with a high level of urgency, as companies were under pressure to secure mining leases and commence operation prior to the next State election in late 2012, as it was thought that a change in leadership could hinder further developments if the State Labor Party should return to power. At the start of 2010 there were 27 uranium projects in the State, "with five resource companies "significantly advanced" enough to start firing up production as soon as 2012" (Towie, 2010). All five had lodged applications for mining leases. In total, more than thirty sites with uranium oxide deposits were identified (Department of Mines and Petroleum, 2011). Another sign of the urgency associated with and interest in uranium mining were the two international uranium mining conferences held in WA during the first half of 2010. Sydney-based AC Events' Australian Uranium Summit in May and Vertical Events' annual Australian Uranium Conference in July each attracted hundreds of delegates from around the world. As a result of these developments, Australia's activist community frequently described Western Australia as the "frontline" in their battle against uranium mining in both planning meetings and interviews.

The impact of uranium mining on Indigenous Australia

The issue of Indigenous land rights is tightly interwoven with uranium mining and has thus been a major focus of the WA ANM's campaigns and a key argument against involvement in the nuclear cycle. As shown in Illustration 2.2, most of the major uranium deposits, and hence proposed operations, are located in remote

areas of the State, signifying that most West Australians will never come in contact with the actual mining operations. This physical distance arguably results in a level of emotional distance, which in turn impacts the level of involvement in the nuclear debate by individuals. One obvious exception is local Indigenous communities, who are largely underrepresented as part of the nuclear debate, as they struggle to have their voices heard. Indigenous Australians were the major victims of the nuclear weapons tests in the 1950s and 1960s (Cross, 2001; Hintjens, 2000; Hymans, 2000). Similarly, Indigenous rights were a major focus of the Jabiluka campaign in the late 20th century. The proposed construction of the mine in the heart of the Kakadu National Park, a World Heritage site and the home of the Mirrar people, provoked public debate and controversy (Banerjee, 2000; Hintjens, 2000) focused on environmental concerns and prominently involving local Aboriginal communities. According to activists and major international NGOs, Australia's track record with regard to its treatment of minorities, in particular its Indigenous population, has not improved much since. Australia's human rights record has been continuously criticised by the United Nations, in particular by the Human Rights Commission (UNHRC), which has emphasised the high level of disadvantage minorities face and the dangers to cultural and natural values as a result of major interventions and construction projects (Alberici, 2010; Boland, 2000). Aboriginal struggles have been theorised in terms of Western perspectives (Banerjee, 2000), thus largely failing to acknowledge local concerns, significance, and values about issues relating to health, employment, education and lifestyle choices. Despite the introduction of extensive community engagement and consultation programs, the mining industry was criticised for ignoring the uneven distribution of resources and negotiating power between multinational corporations and traditional owners (O'Faircheallaigh & Corbett, 2005; Rickard, 2011). The WA anti-nuclear movement emphasised its close alliance with Indigenous communities and its commitment to represent their views and priorities as part of their campaigns. In fact, it may be argued that the Indigenous focus was a major campaign strategy in the WA ANM's effort to challenge the status quo, an idea that I return to later in the thesis.

Changing attitudes in Australia

On its website, the ANAWA described itself as “more than a special interest group”, by representing and speaking on behalf of “70-80 per cent of West Australians, who are opposed to uranium mining and waste dumping in Australia” (Anti Nuclear Alliance of Australia (ANAWA), 2008). However, this claim was not substantiated,

nor supported by relevant statistics. The movement was facing additional challenges in terms of public sentiment and opposition to uranium mining, as outlined in the paragraphs below. These included the loss of key allies and the ageing of the movement. Australia is recognised amongst the largest per capita polluters in the world (Akter & Bennett, 2011; Bose, 2010; Garnaut, 2008). Within the context of the current climate change and global warming debate, this leadership position signified a direct threat to the Australian lifestyle, characterised by a high level of car ownership (Young & Caisey, 2010) and consumption of resources. In 2010, 90% of the country's electricity generation depended on coal, an unsustainable record, particularly considering that the Australian population is expected to double by 2049 (Strong & Munro, 2009). On the other hand, Australia is also expected to be amongst the first countries affected by rising sea levels, due to its relatively limited elevation (E. Moore & Smith, 1995).

As noted, Australia has traditionally experienced strong public and sectional opposition to uranium mining and particularly nuclear energy. This was once again highlighted in the 2007 Federal election. A study conducted during the same year found that three quarters of Australian women, and 72% of people with children, were opposed to living near a nuclear power plant, which in turn would make it difficult for both industry and governments to identify a suitable reactor location (Macintosh & Hamilton, 2007). However, it appears that nationally the gap between supporters and opponents of the nuclear power industry was slowly closing (Walker, 2009; World Entertainment News Network, 2009). This may explain why the incoming Rudd government funded an Australian Research Council study (at a cost of \$133,500) into public opinion on nuclear power as an alternative energy option (Walker, 2009), despite its public opposition to nuclear power, which featured prominently during the Federal Labor Party's election campaign and was credited as partly responsible for its win over the outgoing Howard Government. Australia was in a unique position, with most of its citizens never having come in contact with, or even sighted, a nuclear power station. A 2009 poll conducted by the Uranium Information Centre found that the 40-55 years age group is most strongly opposed to nuclear power, which may be explained by their first-hand experience with the mass demonstrations in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as growing up in the shadow of the Cold War and witnessing the meltdowns at Chernobyl and Three Mile Island (albeit from a distance) (Strong & Munro, 2009). The same study found that younger people were much less resistant to the idea of nuclear power. In response to the Obama Administration's commissioning of the first new nuclear reactors on US soil

in 30 years, national broadcaster Channel 7 ran a phone poll on its popular Sunrise Morning Program, which resulted in overwhelming support for the nuclear energy option (Channel 7, 2010).⁶ This indicates that public sentiment in Australia regarding nuclear power may be changing.

In Western Australia, the State's daily newspaper commissioned an opinion survey around the same time (February 2010), which for the first time identified support for uranium mining (McPhee, 2010). Young West Australians in particular appeared to be less opposed to uranium mining. The annual I-Generation Survey found that support amongst 18-30 year olds had only slightly increased since 2008, however, opposition decreased significantly from 41% to 27% over the same period. Potential job opportunities were suggested as an explanation for particularly high support amongst young males (Painted Dog Research, 2010). These findings strongly question ANAWA's claim to represent the interests of around three quarters of the State's population and consequently the legitimacy of the organisation's actions. The decreasing opposition to nuclear energy amongst young Australians may be a reason as to why a core of anti-nuclear activists from the 1970s remained in leadership roles in 2010. It may be argued that activists like Jo Vallentine and Robin Chapple sustain the movement. The number of supporters has dramatically fallen since peak turnouts in the 1980s, when tens of thousands of demonstrators joined the Palm Sunday Rallies in Perth. In a presentation to third year public relations students at Curtin University (9th March 2010), ANAWA representatives admitted that they struggled to enthuse and motivate 17-25 year olds to become involved. It appears that the movement may be ageing, due to changing public support and sympathies. However, the absence of mass demonstrations may also indicate a change in activist tactics and strategies that could be better suited to a younger activist audience. This is investigated in more detail in this study.

The lack of new volunteers is not the only challenge the activist movement faced at the commencement of this study. In addition, it appeared to be losing some of its former allies, as the debate became more nuanced in light of concerns about carbon pollution. Australia's best-known anti-nuclear activist and former Nuclear Disarmament Party candidate, Peter Garrett, joined the Labor Party and subsequently gained much attention in his role as the Rudd government's Federal Environment Minister (November 2007 – February 2010). In this role, the former

⁶ Note: final results were not made available. This poll was run throughout the morning (6-9am), following an interview with David Sweeney, from the Australian Conservation Foundation, and Nuclear Power Advocate Ziggy Switkowski. Halfway through the program 79% of callers were in support of nuclear energy. Neither Channel 7, nor the program, responded to requests for the final outcome.

outspoken activist gave approval for the expansion of the South Australian Beverly Uranium mine (Franklin, 2008) and provided clearance for the construction of Australia's first new mine in over a decade, attracting widespread criticism from the Australian Greens and environmental campaigners (ABC News, 2009). The Four Mile mine, 550 kilometres north of Adelaide, was predicted to become the tenth largest uranium mine in the world (Grattan & Fitzgerald, 2009). The former outspoken activist explained that he was "certain this operation poses no credible risk to the environment" (Garrett, 2009). In the meantime, South Australia's Honeymoon mine was also given government approval (Fitzgerald, 2010), and BPH Billiton planned on tripling its output at Olympic Dam whilst opening the Yeelirrie mine in Western Australia, with the support of the WA Barnett Government.

The characteristics of activism appear to be changing. Mass rallies were left behind with the 20th century, with only around 100 protesters making a stand against a proposed new mine in Alice Springs in 2009 (Nancarrow, 2009). Indeed, limited public displays around the country appear in sharp contrast to the mass movements in the 1970s and 1980s. According to 2007/2008 data collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 82% (12.8 million) of Australian adults were reportedly concerned about the environment (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010a). However, only around a third of these respondents had been involved in any form of environmental activity. Most popular actions were the signing of petitions (17%), donations (14%) and expressing concern through letters, emails or in conversation with authorities (10%). Notably, the "least common environmental activity undertaken was participating in a demonstration or rally on environmental issues" (2%). Martin (2007) further suggests that this "mainstream status" of environmental consciousness may be counterproductive in itself and hence one of the reasons behind the movement's decline.

[The Anti Nuclear Alliance of Western Australia \(ANAWA\) in 2010](#)

As I discuss in detail in the following chapter, public relations research to date has largely ignored the unequal distribution of 'power' in relation to activist communication. Power is frequently associated with the one key resource activists are lacking: economic capital. By drawing on Bourdieu's Theory of Practice, this study aims to investigate how activists make use of alternative types of capital to ensure their voice is being heard in public forums. Although activism research represents one of the largest bodies of knowledge in PR scholarship, the focus has been on the organisational perspective, driven by an issue management and

damage limitation agenda. This study aims to gain new insights into professional communication from an activist perspective, by following the development of the BUMP (Ban Uranium Mining Permanently) campaign. Much of the PR research agenda into activism has been based on conceptual papers (e.g. Derville, 2005; Dhir, 2007; Karagianni & Cornelissen, 2006) and retrospective analysis of secondary data, such as media coverage and campaign materials (e.g. Coombs & Holladay, 2007; Demetrious, 2001; Gueterbock, 2004; Motion & Weaver, 2005; Stokes & Rubin, 2010; Weaver, 2010). This study aims to address current gaps in the literature by gaining real time, first-hand insight into activist communication, as the anti-nuclear movement responds to the global and local challenges and changes related to nuclear energy adoption. The following paragraphs provide a brief introduction to the Anti Nuclear Alliance of Western Australia (ANAWA), including key activists as well as the major challenges faced by the movement in 2010. This section is informed by formative stages of primary data collection, as well as subject specific literature.

As discussed earlier, the WA ANM has been a prominent voice in Australian politics and social commentary for over four decades. Activists' focus has shifted over the years from opposition to nuclear reactors and weapons testing to challenging the presence of American warships in Australian waters and harbours and, most recently, uranium mining. As mining companies encounter challenges in other Australian states, the focus has increasingly shifted to pro-mining Western Australia, attracting investors and activists from around the country. Facing what might arguably be their biggest challenge yet (to prevent any mining of uranium in Western Australia), the WA ANM has reformed with new energy, currently representing one of the most visible and outspoken social movements in Australia.

The movement's peak organisation commenced 2010 with a major financial challenge. Having benefited from a major donation as a result of the reversal of the State's mining ban, ANAWA was now running out of funds. An anonymous donation enabled the movement to employ two part-time campaigners plus administrative support throughout 2009. However, by 2010 the Alliance was facing the challenge of continuing operations with a maximum of 0.2 full-time equivalent staff. This shortfall further emphasises the unequal distribution of resources between activists and corporations, as well as the difference in challenges faced by both parties to the argument.

As the name suggests, the 'Alliance' is a grassroots organisation that in 2010 represented a wide range of small and high profile organisations, ranging from local community groups such as the Fremantle Anti Nuclear Group (FANG) and its Rockingham counterpart (RANG) to well established environmental networks, such as the Conversation Council and the Wilderness Society. ANAWA also worked closely with WANFA, the Western Australian Nuclear Free Alliance, a group that represented Western Australia's Aboriginal communities, concerned about existing or proposed nuclear developments (Western Australian Nuclear Free Alliance, 2010b). Key representatives from 'member' organisations met on a regular basis as part of the "Undermining Mining" working party. In 2009, these representatives included Nat Lowrey, a WA Nuclear Free Advocate (employed jointly by the Conservation Council and Wilderness Society), Kate Vallentine, the daughter of Jo Vallentine and part-time employee, and Hillary Wheater, a Community Education Coordinator and part-time ANAWA employee. Both Kate's and Hillary's positions concluded at the beginning of 2010 due to funding issues. Other key players were Sarah Holt-Foreman, working as part-time administrative support for ANAWA as well as Oxfam and The Greens, Kerry-Ann (KA) Garlick from the Fremantle Anti Nuclear Group, Robin Chapple, Greens MLC (WA) and, of course, Jo Vallentine, the former Nuclear Disarmament and Greens Senator and now Chairperson of ANAWA.

At this time, particularly strong ties existed between the Conservation Council, the Wilderness Society and the anti-nuclear movement, predominantly due to the fact that these two environmental peak bodies had recently made the decision to jointly fund the newly created position of a WA Uranium Free Campaigner. The campaigner was located at the Conservation Council offices at Lotteries House in West Perth (the new 'activist' hub⁷), where anti-nuclear issues were one focus alongside marine conservation, a restriction on genetically modified crops, climate change, deforestation, and many more (see ccwa.org.au 2010a). There were strong ties between the movement and the WA branch of the Greens Party. Many supporters moved between causes as well as in and out of the political arena. For example, the current WA Greens Senator Scott Ludlam, a graphic designer by trade, became interested in politics after joining the movement as a volunteer, and subsequently continued his anti-nuclear focus on a Federal level. Fellow Greens politician Robin Chapple, a Member of the WA Legislative Council for the Mining

⁷ Like the former Environment House, Lotteries House provides access to offices and resources to a wide range of not for profit and activist organisations.

and the Pastoral Region, had been a strong supporter for decades and was employed as the Anti Nuclear Alliance WA (ANAWA) coordinator for a number of years. However, he split his time between many causes, resulting in a particularly strong link with the Save the Burrup (ancient rock art on the Burrup Peninsula North of Perth) campaign. Robin Chapple was also one of the key links between the movement and the Minerals Policy Institute (MPI), a non-governmental organisation that specialised in preventing environmentally and socially destructive mining, minerals, and energy projects throughout the Asia-Pacific region. The Quakers, Oxfam and the Save the Old Growth Forest Campaign were just some examples of linked causes and interests. Although individual activists, driven by their personal interests and beliefs, usually foster these relationships, they are also largely connected by underlying characteristics, such as a strong interest in social justice and a commitment to non-violent direct action. These directly link back to the movement's origin in the mass mobilisation movement of the 1970s, which emphasised sustainability, community and equal rights.

The Anti Nuclear Alliance of Australia (ANAWA) continued to act as an umbrella group for organisations campaigning against the nuclearisation of Western Australia and beyond, as it continues to do in 2013. As a grassroots organisation, ANAWA has also been able to use slightly more unconventional tactics than, for example, the Conservation Council, which, as the State's peak environmental organisation, is positioned as more traditional and conservative. As an umbrella organisation and voice of the anti-nuclear movement, ANAWA has a very flat and relatively fluid structure. Due to its lack of public funding and the resulting reliance on donations, the alliance currently depends on a highly limited number of paid staff, a voluntary board and a broad pool of volunteers. ANAWA saw its key roles in research and political lobbying, as well as the distribution of information, which allows the wider community to "make informed decisions about uranium mining, nuclear power, weapons and waste" (Anti Nuclear Alliance of Australia (ANAWA), 2009a). As such, communication was one of the key tools used by the movement to challenge the status quo.⁸

⁸ Participant observation has provided crucial insight into the complexity of the challenges faced by the WA ANM, as well as enabled the identification of key activists at the time of commencement of the main data collection phase. The author believes that this depth of insight would not have been possible based on literature or interviews alone, particularly when considering the fluid nature of the WA ANM.

For a more detailed insight into key activists during various stages of this study, please refer to the movement charts in the appendix.

To summarise, after being presumed 'dead' following nuclear disasters in Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, in 2010 the multi-billion dollar nuclear industry claimed the emergence of a nuclear renaissance on the back of its strategic re-positioning as a low carbon solution to the impending threat of global warming. At the same time, public interest in nuclear issues and opposition to nuclear power dramatically subsided. In Western Australia, the mining industry performed a major role in supporting the State's economy and ultimately its population's lifestyle, characterised by its outdoor culture and considerably high disposable income (Carter & Kaczmarek, 2009). In 2010, West Australians were proud of their State's success and buoyant economy. However, this lifestyle was largely dependent on the continued success of the mining industry and the provision of highly paid 'fly in fly out' employment opportunities. Therefore, it can be argued that the Western Australian lifestyle was characterised by two opposing frames. Whilst governments, industry and a large proportion of the West Australian public subscribed to the economic frame, emphasising the need for investment and resource exploitation in order to maintain, or even improve, the existing lifestyle, environmentalists highlighted their commitment to a conservation frame, focused on public health, heritage and the protection of WA's natural environment for generations to come. Whilst environmentalists recognised the industry's role as a major contributor to the State's economy, they continuously raised concern about the threat these operations posed to the unique biodiversity and landscape of WA (Nicol, 2006), as well as their impact on Indigenous communities' health and traditional culture. Although individual activists' opposition may have extended beyond uranium mining, as a movement the WA ANM was not opposed to all forms of mining, but strongly objected to any involvement in the nuclear cycle. As such, there was no grey zone or area of compromise between activists and (mining) companies, as suggested in popular PR literature (see e.g. L. A. Grunig, 1992a). The movement's position was that uranium could only be safe if left in the ground (Anti Nuclear Alliance of Australia (ANAWA), 2009b). This corresponded to beliefs held by some Indigenous people in "wanti – leave the poison in the ground" (Western Australian Nuclear Free Alliance, 2010b), further emphasising the strong connection between the WA ANM and Indigenous health and land rights. The resulting unequal distribution of negotiating power and access to resources will be discussed and analysed in detail in the findings chapters.

Chapter summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the WA anti-nuclear movement, set within the context of the global social movement and in opposition to the multi-billion dollar nuclear industry. It is important to note that this study commenced during a global economic downturn. Although Australia was largely able to avoid the impact of the global recession, which crippled most other developed economies around the world, the decrease in commodity prices, particularly iron ore, nickel and alumina, did impact on the resource-driven Western Australian employment and export market. This increased interest in alternative commodities, such as uranium.

Despite its geographic isolation, the WA ANM is firmly integrated within the Australian and the global anti-nuclear network. Knowledge and expertise have been passed on over the past decades, from generation to generation, and by key activists who have continued their involvement well into the 21st century. As illustrated earlier, WA anti-nuclear activists have demonstrated their skills as effective and highly creative campaigners. Drawing on four decades of experience and expertise, the movement has been highly successful in preventing a number of developments, such as the introduction of nuclear energy in Western Australia, the establishment of international nuclear waste repositories in its outback and – by the commencement of this study - the mining of uranium. It could thus be hypothesized that WA anti-nuclear activists are effective communicators, if they have convinced politicians and – crucially – WA citizens that uranium is only safe if “left in the ground”. This hypothesis is investigated in detail as part of this thesis.

However, at the start of 2010, the WA anti-nuclear movement arguably faced its biggest challenge. Once presumed dead, the nuclear industry effectively used the global warming platform to strategically position itself as the only feasible solution to increased demand for reliable energy sources and to reduce carbon emissions. At this point in time, the industry gained increased community support, by having repositioned itself as a clean and green alternative to coal. At the same time, opposition to both nuclear energy and particularly uranium mining was declining. In Western Australia uranium is discussed as a potential replacement for those commodities that had been underperforming as a result of the GFC. As such, the movement was in the unique position where both State and Federal governments may not have been openly in favour of nuclear energy, but were nevertheless committed to responding to the global demand for Australia’s uranium ore.

As the next chapter illustrates, scholars have argued that new communication technologies may act as a power-leveling tool, providing activists with cost effective, global communication tools that may compensate for their lack of resources. As such, some argue, they may counteract the resource discrepancy between corporations and activist groups. Some scholars also argue that the David vs. Goliath analogy may provide activists with an advantage in regard to media coverage. These power-leveling suggestions are explored further within the context of the WA ANM. However, traditionally the practice of public relations has been associated with communication activities by corporations and governments. From this perspective, activists are positioned as adversaries, challengers and essentially a danger to professional public relations. This study sets out to challenge this viewpoint by studying the WA ANM as communication professionals in their own right, in order to add new, novel insights to the public relations' body of knowledge.

Chapter 3

Literature review

In order to provide a context for this project and highlight its contribution to the body of knowledge, I position this study within the context of the existing literature. This most notably includes public relations scholarship, but further extends into related fields, especially social movement research. The choice and focus of this study, and early research ideas in particular, have undoubtedly been guided by the existing literature in the field of public relations, which is overviewed in this chapter. The purpose of this study is to investigate how activists communicate and overcome existing power imbalances, as well as how this insight may add to existing literature on activist communication, which is largely issue-management focused. I note key themes, discuss the limitations of current studies, and focus on the emerging critical perspective in public relations scholarship. Next, I provide a review of activist authored literature, followed by relevant research into activism from a social movement perspective. Particular attention is paid to the existing knowledge of anti-nuclear activism. The overarching aim of this chapter is to review the current body of knowledge in regard to activist communication, with an emphasis on theoretical concepts and questions that will inform the data analysis and theory development phases of this study. This literature review was developed iteratively and continued throughout the progress of data collection and analysis.

Activist communication represents one of the largest bodies of knowledge in public relations literature. Scholarly research has to date provided insight into a wide range of initiators of activism, such as shareholders (Admati, Pfleiderer, & Zechner, 1994; Dhir, 2007; Gillan & Starks, 2000; Ragas, 2013; M. P. Smith, 1996), internal stakeholders (McCown, 2007) and even PR practitioners (Berger, 2005; Berger & Reber, 2006; Holtzhausen, 2012; Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002) as categories of activists. For example, Holtzhausen (2002, 2011) has highlighted the organisational activist role, which promotes a more equitable relationship between organisations and their stakeholders.

Dominant themes in the existing literature include anti-corporatism (Karagianni & Cornelissen, 2006), global movements (Seo, Kim, & Yang, 2009) and environmental activism (e.g. Beder, 2002a; Greenberg, Knight, & Westersund, 2011; J. E. Grunig, 1989; Heath, 1998; Pickerill, 2003; Reber & Berger, 2005; Reber & Kim, 2006; Reber, et al., 2010; M. Taylor, et al., 2001). The strong focus on environmental

activism has been echoed in related fields of study, such as organisational development (e.g. Dreiling, Lougee, Jonna, & Nakamura, 2008; Salazar, 2009), politics (e.g. Diani, 2007; Doherty, Plows, & Wall, 2007), media and cultural studies (e.g. Lester & Hutchins, 2009), psychology (e.g. Dono, Webb, & Richardson) and, naturally, environmental studies (e.g. La Rocca, 2004).

In the *Handbook of Public Relations*, Smith and Ferguson (2001) differentiate between issue and interest groups as two basic forms of activist entities. Whilst issue activists focus on border-spanning causes, such as global warming, landmines or pollution, interest activists are concerned about matters closer to home. Often referred to as NIMBY (not in my back yard) campaigners (Demetrious, 2001; M. F. Smith, 2005), their aim is to influence an issue they feel will impact on their own lifestyle and standard of living, hence evoking a strong emotional reaction or physical implications. Based on this definition, anti-nuclear activists would fall into the earlier category of issue-focused groups. Social movement scholars have examined this type of activism in more detail, differentiating it as “new social movements” (NSM), which they argue emerged as a distinct form of activism during the 1960s. NSMs tend to have a longer lifecycle than traditional movements, which are predominantly focused on materialistic qualities, such as economic wellbeing or job security (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Instead, NSMs are increasingly preoccupied with changes on a national or even international scale that relate to personal beliefs and ideals, such as global warming, human rights or, as relevant in the context of this study, nuclear disarmament. Social movement theory has profoundly influenced this study and is covered in more detail in this chapter. However, this chapter will firstly provide an overview of the key themes in PR literature that focuses on activism, commencing with the dominant corporate perspective. Four key areas of criticism will be covered in this context: the failure by scholars to adequately acknowledge power imbalances; the assumed notion of a compromise as best practice; the perception of activists as homogenous entities; and the prevailing US-centricity in activist PR literature.

Through the corporate lens

Despite the strong scholarly interest in activist communication, the public relations research agenda has to date been largely limited to the corporate perspective, motivated by a focus on issues management and damage limitation (e.g. Bunting & Lipski, 2001; Deegan, 2001; L. A. Grunig, 1992a; Illia, 2003; John & Thomson, 2003; Turner, 2007; Werder, 2006). Scholars such as Anderson (1992) and

Coombs (2002), who prescribe to this worldview, have emphasised the need for ongoing environmental scanning in order to 'detect' and 'eliminate' any potential opposition to corporate goals. From this perspective, 'outrage' and opposition are emotional phenomena that can be 'managed' in a presumed rational manner, but furthermore should be identified early and ultimately controlled (e.g. Deegan, 2001). Much of this research has been either authored (e.g. J. E. Grunig, 1989; J. E. Grunig & Grunig, 1997; L. A. Grunig, 1986a, 1987, 1992a, 1992b), supervised or otherwise heavily influenced by the Maryland-based Emeritus Professors James and Larissa Grunig (e.g. Anderson, 1992; A. Cooper, 2009; Guiniven, 2002), whose preference is for research that is underpinned by a positivistic orientation. Insight into activist communication is thus further limited due to a relatively restricted use in research methodologies and perspectives.

Activist communication and the evolution of the field of public relations are inherently intertwined (Coombs & Holladay, 2007, 2012a, 2012b). As corporations have become more aware of the importance of reputation and image management from the mid-20th century onwards, activists have been increasingly perceived as obstacles or barriers to achieving their corporate goals. From this perspective, activists create the need for issues management and damage limitation programs (e.g. L. A. Grunig, 1986b, 1992a):

Although activist groups present threats for organizations, they provide an opportunity for public relations. Excellent public relations, that is, helps organizations deal with activists – thus increasing the need for and the power of the communication department. (L. A. Grunig, 1992a, p. 503)

Moreover, activists justify the existence of public relations as a separate management function:

Activism is particularly important as a specific variable because public relations would lose much of its value to organisations if activists did not exist. Without activists, the environment would be static and placid rather than dynamic and turbulent. (J. N. A. M. Kim & Sriramesh, 2009, p. 98)

This perceived close relationship between modern or corporate public relations and activism illustrates why scholarly research into activist communications spans more than three decades and has evolved into one of the dominant subject areas in public relations literature to date. In fact, Smith (2005) argues that "activism has been one of the catalysts for the development of public relations throughout the field's history" (p. 5). However, investigations into activism by PR scholars have

been narrow, ideologically invested by pluralism and functionalism, and essentially self-serving. Public relations scholars have indicated that activists' tools and tactics resemble those of modern public relations professionals, by listing media engagement (e.g. the creation of photo opportunities, media stunts, news conferences and interviews), information and public education campaigns (e.g. the production of fact sheets and newsletters), event management (e.g. the running of seminars, gatherings and rallies) and the lobbying of opinion leaders and decision makers as 'typical' activist activities (e.g. Deegan, 2001; L. A. Grunig, 1992a; Jackson, 1982; M. F. Smith, 2005). All of these are also typical public relations activities. Essentially, activists seek "to influence public opinion" (Deegan, 2001p. 9), which can equally be said about corporate PR campaigns.

The International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Research Foundation funded Excellence Study (J. E. Grunig, 1992) has undoubtedly influenced and even shaped public relations scholarship. Dating back more than two decades, the Excellence Study was one of the most comprehensive studies into professional communication and public relations at the time. One of the key outcomes was the identification of two-way symmetric communication between an organisation and its stakeholders as best practice, which was highlighted as a sign of "excellent" or successful public relations. Over time, activism has become an inherent part of the Excellence Theory, based on the authors' argument that out of six contextual conditions that affect public relations, "activism might be the most important" (L. A. Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002, p. 546). However, what becomes apparent in studies inspired by the Excellence Theory is that the definition of 'success' appears to be solely limited to the corporate perspective; that is, the perceived success as judged by Chief Executive Officers and public relations professionals (e.g. J. E. Grunig & Grunig, 1997; L. A. Grunig, 1992a; L. A. Grunig, et al., 2002). Activists' perceptions and definitions of 'success' have been widely ignored.

The integral role of power in activist communication

Although the practice of symmetrical communication continues to be commonly considered as the preferred model for excellent and ethical public relations, both in PR literature and particularly major textbooks (Duffy, 2000), scholars have increasingly questioned its intentions. Can symmetrical communication be automatically presumed to be ethical, if organisations are essentially making small sacrifices in exchange for economic advantages (as acknowledged in J. E. Grunig,

1992, 2001)? As such, corporations are arguably motivated by self-interest, rather than a genuine commitment to the community or environment (Roper, 2005). Despite heavily promoting symmetrical communication as a more balanced, inclusive and ethical practice, the Excellence researchers have been criticised for effectively promoting an asymmetrical research agenda “that continues to subsidise commercial and state communications at the expense of other segments of the population” (Karlberg, 1996, p. 263). At the core of this criticism lies the argument that the notion of balanced, two-way communication essentially ignores the unequal distribution of power between activists and organisations (Coombs & Holladay, 2007; Dozier & Lauzen, 2000; R. Jones, 2002). In his defence, Grunig (1992a) refers to Olson’s (1971) *Logic of Collective Action*, which suggests that activists’ fervour and commitment to the cause may effectively compensate for the sophistication of PR professionals employed by corporations. However, drawing on critical theory, Dozier and Lauzen (2000) argue that “a symmetrical world view among large corporations is insufficient to offset the enormous resource disparity between organisations and activist publics” (p.10). Corporations benefit from substantial financial budgets, allocated human resources and specialist equipment, whilst activists largely rely on donations and volunteers. Hence, a number of scholars (e.g. Dozier & Lauzen, 2000; Karlberg, 1996; Stokes & Rubin, 2010) have urged the scholarly community to distance themselves from the widely accepted two-way symmetrical model. Many critical scholars (e.g. P. Hughes & Demetrious, 2006) have challenged its very foundations, arguing that the model is primarily conceptual, without practical application or evidence that PR is practised this way. They argue that to understand how PR influences contemporary public debate, we need to outgrow the notion of a compromise between activists and organisations as a key outcome of excellent communication. They further emphasise that as a discipline, public relations has traditionally promoted business interests over others, thus privileging a management perspective in scholarship. This leads to an improved understanding of how corporations can benefit from skilfully communicating with their operating environments. From this perspective, target publics or audiences – including activists – are seen as a passive entity “receptive to whatever skilfully crafted messages are transmitted to it” (P. Hughes & Demetrious, 2006, p. 96).

Whilst power has become increasingly recognised as a crucial element in the activist-organisation relationship, its unequal distribution has been largely ignored (Coombs, 1998; Dozier & Lauzen, 2000; R. Jones, 2002) or over-simplified in the

existing PR theory. Power is a crucial element in the battle to maintain or challenge the status quo. Holtzhausen (2007) argues that power plays a major role in both the formation and life cycle of activist groups. Nevertheless, power remains “under theorised in public relations literature” (Holtzhausen, 2007, p. 373) (Edwards, 2006, 2007, 2009). Whilst the focus of the Excellence Study has been on the power of the public relations function, focused on being recognised as part of top management or the ‘dominant coalition’, my interest is not in developing generalisable theories about power and activism, but instead in gaining insight into the power resources of activists and activist groups, and theorising in this specific context. Within this context, the media has been highlighted as an alternative source of power for activists (L. A. Grunig, 1992a; Holtzhausen, 2000). The role of both new and traditional media is discussed in more detail on pages 87-91 of this chapter.

Compromise as a best practice strategy

Despite increasing criticism regarding the re-enforcement of a corporate perspective throughout their work, the Maryland school of thought maintains – often highly defensively – an existing interest in not only the “role of public relations in coping with hostile elements of the environment” (J. E. Grunig & Grunig, 1997, p. 29), but also in activists as communicators. They argue that activists can equally benefit by applying the Excellence Theory and, in particular, the advocated two-way symmetrical approach to communication with their publics and – most importantly – organisations. As part of their work, the husband and wife team of Grunig and Grunig proposed a five step normative theory of PR for activist organisations (J. E. Grunig & Grunig, 1997). This is largely based on symmetrical communication and the notion of a ‘win-win solution’, with the ultimate aim being to establish a long-term relationship between activist groups and the organisations they challenge. Smith and Ferguson (2001) acknowledged that activists may often be seen using confrontational tactics, but conclude that the “most fruitful results more likely are accomplished through negotiation and compromise” (p. 296).

However, critical scholars have strongly questioned the notion of negotiating a ‘middle ground’ as a desirable goal of ‘excellent’ public relations. A ‘compromise’ essentially may not appeal to many activist groups who are entirely opposed to a business proposition (Stokes & Rubin, 2010) or policy decision. For example, in her case study about New Zealand’s Mothers Against Genetic Engineering (MAAdGE), Weaver (2010) details how the group was unequivocally opposed to genetic engineering, whilst the government positioned it as a solution to environmental and

human health problems. What becomes apparent in this case study is that there was no grey, or win-win, zone. Activists felt strongly about their adopted issue, leaving no room for a compromise. The two-way symmetrical model thus fails to address both powerless groups, and those with irreconcilable differences that may deliberately aim to remain outside the zone of compromise (Stokes & Rubin, 2010). Furthermore, it particularly fails to recognise those groups that may possess too few resources to even register on the corporate environmental scanning radar in the first place. The widespread appeal of the Excellence Theory and its associated models undoubtedly lies in their simplicity. However, this simplification ultimately results in the failure to acknowledge the uniqueness and complexity of individual relationships and the motivations of different parties. Despite her public support for the Maryland school of thought (Holtzhausen, 2007), Holtzhausen (2000) found little evidence that corporate commitment to symmetrical communication encouraged activists to shift their stance against the organisations they pressure. She concluded that a major contributing reason may be the fear of being co-opted into supporting organisational practices which activists were opposed to in the first place (Holtzhausen, 2007). These findings challenge the assumed existence of a win-win solution or zone of compromise. The reality of activism is often black and white, characterised by the absence of a 'happy medium', instead resulting in clear cut winners and losers (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000).

Perception of activists as homogenous entities

Another point of criticism has been that public relations scholars have largely failed to recognise not only the breadth of PR activities conducted by activists, but also neglect to recognise the "kaleidoscope" of activism. In PR literature, activism is commonly referred to as:

[...] the process by which groups of people exert pressure on organizations or other institutions to change policies, practices, or conditions that the activists find problematic. (M. F. Smith, 2005, p. 5)

Here, activists are defined as:

...people who feel strongly about an issue and actively advocate on behalf of that issue, sometimes in a not-too-flattering sense. (Holtzhausen, 2007, p. 375)

And activist groups are defined as:

a group of two or more individuals who organize in order to influence another public or publics through action that may include education, compromise, persuasion, pressure tactics, or force. (L. A. Grunig, 1992a, p. 504; L. A. Grunig, et al., 2002, p. 446).

Whilst these definitions undoubtedly provide a useful basis for the widespread focus on normative theory development, they fail to recognise the vast disparity in resources, professionalism, decision-making processes, and capabilities available to different types of activist groups; thus essentially perceiving them as a “homogenous entity” (P. Hughes & Demetrious, 2006, p. 96). Furthermore, the broad nature of these definitions fails to recognise activists as non-homogenous objects; that is as individuals driven by personal beliefs and passions. This is despite Larissa Grunig’s (1986a) conclusion in an earlier study that no generalisations could be made about the demographics of activists.

The definitions of activists and activism above broadly encompass a range of organisations from international NGOs and not-for-profit organisations, such as Greenpeace, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Amnesty International, to fluid and context-driven social movements, such as Occupy Wall Street and the Egyptian uprising. They also incorporate local community groups that may be opposed to an infrastructure project. Despite the vast difference in structures and communication capabilities, PR scholarship indirectly implies that these entities are comparable, if not identical. Undoubtedly, a handful of concerned tax payers, writing to their local MP in order to voice their opposition to the expansion of a cement factory, draw on different resources and PR capabilities than an established, international not-for-profit organisation, with paid staff and often considerable assets. In fact, PR scholars have highlighted that established NGOs and not-for-profit organisations have increasingly adopted centralised approaches modelled on corporations (Demetrious, 2001; Jaques, 2006), and thus can be studied in a similar way (Holtzhausen, 2007). In contrast, grassroots activism materialises in response to situations and issues, and therefore often lacks the benefit of established networks and resources (Demetrious, 2001). However, the current activism PR research agenda gives large, established environmental NGOs the major share of attention. Prominent examples are the international NGO Greenpeace (e.g. A. Cooper, 2009; Gueterbock, 2004; Heath, 1998; Roper, 2005) and the Sierra Club (e.g. J. E. Grunig, 1989; Reber & Berger, 2005; Reber, et al., 2010), which Reber, et al. (2010) may refer to as practising grassroots activism, but which in fact is one of North America’s oldest and largest environmental organisations. When selecting a subject

for their study, US-based scholars have largely relied on established databases such as Charity Navigator (Seo, et al., 2009), Guidestar database (Dreiling, et al., 2008) and envirolink.org (Reber & Kim, 2006; M. Taylor, et al., 2001). This has led to the automatic exclusion in research projects of smaller and less visible groups that are not registered for tax purposes. Non-incorporated groups have equally been left out of the analysis if researchers rely on data provided by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) (e.g. D. H. Smith, 2000), or the national equivalent in non-US research settings. Social networking platforms such as Facebook may increasingly provide access to smaller, less structured networks. However, even if the opportunity exists, researchers appear to favour the familiarity and public profile of incorporated not-for profit-organisations as the focus of their studies into activism (e.g. Waters, et al., 2009). Research to date also ignores the fact that particularly smaller communities, or more radical grassroots groups, may actively avoid a strong presence on social media, in order to limit access and insight into their strategies and tactics.

Holtzhausen (2007) argues that once organisations become institutionalised, like the Sierra Club, WWF, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) or, in fact, any non-profit organisation, they “lose their typical activist attributes” (p. 369). As they grow in size they begin to adopt business principles and become “national or multinational entities with “brand value”, multi-million dollar budgets and teams of full time employees” (Jaques, 2006, p. 413). The Sierra Club, for example, has more than 500 paid staff members and a Board of Directors. Interestingly, despite its size and structure, the Sierra Club describes itself as “the largest and most influential *grassroots* [emphasis added] environmental organization in the United States” (Sierra Club, 2010). However, rather than practising PR themselves, these organisations increasingly rely on corporate communication consultancies to assist in reaching the hearts and minds of key publics and policy-makers (Dimitrov, 2008). The WWF, for example, hires internationally recognised PR agencies to communicate their campaign messages (*Adobo Magazine*, 2010; Nicholson, 2009) and as a result has won a number of PR industry awards (UTalkMarketing.com, 2009). Once these organisations have the same structural and organisational attributes as corporations, it may arguably be justified to study them in the same way (Holtzhausen, 2007)—for example, by analysing their websites based on the assumption that the criteria for a “good corporate website” translates directly into the activism context (see e.g. Reber & Kim, 2006; M. Taylor, et al., 2001; Uzunoğlu & Misci Kip, 2013). However, the resulting insight gained provides ‘more of the same’,

rather than a novel understanding of activist communication in a non-corporate context, and how this may vary from what we already know about activist communication.

Further emphasising this point, Kirschenbaum and Kunamei (2001) identify an 'organisational divide' between the community-based and not-for-profit sector, which indicates the need to gain first-hand insight into the communication requirements and activities of smaller, often non-incorporated groups. In *The Logic of Collective Action*, Olson (1971) concludes that smaller groups tend to function better and are more cohesive than larger ones, particularly as every member is aware that his or her contribution to the group is crucial. Equally, in their study of environmental organisations (EOs) Dreiling, et al. (2008) found that organisational culture and resources influence means of communication, leading to the conclusion that organisations with grassroots characteristics in particular support a "wider array of communication tools and hence the potential for a more dynamic communicative praxis" (p. 442). These groups may provide new insights into communication practices, which is something this study aims to do. The prevailing focus on large, established and corporation-like activist groups in PR activism scholarship is arguably largely motivated by ease of access and convenience for the researcher. Smith and Ferguson (2001) acknowledge that the relatively short life cycle of some issues and the dynamic nature of many activist groups may make it challenging to study them. However, as a result, much of the existing body of knowledge is concerned with how activist groups operate in comparison to corporations, or more specifically, corporations' public relations departments. Scholars have traditionally been outsiders, looking inside activist organisations with only limited first-hand activist contact, or none at all. By researching activist communication with a corporate or Excellence Theory lens, scholars have largely failed to gain insight into how non-traditional communicators practise public relations, or indeed if they practise public relations at all, thereby neglecting an opportunity to further inform our knowledge and understanding of public relations as a discipline.

In contrast to public relations scholarship, research studies within management and politics have favoured insight into a range of activist organisations. For example, Dreiling, et al. (2008) surveyed 2000 environmental organisations (although results were based on 400 responses), Salazar's (2009) study is based on 42 semi-structured interviews with environmental activists in the United States Pacific Northwest, while Diani (2007) mapped a total of 82 environmental organisations across three cities (in two countries). These studies may provide opportunities for

generalisation, however, they limit the depth of insight gained into activist communication and activities, both at an individual and organisational level. Furthermore, generalisations made as a result of these studies further emphasise the superficial assumption that activists and activist groups are largely alike in their interests, tactics and objectives. In contrast, PR activism literature is characterised by a strong focus on single case studies (e.g. Argenti, 2004; Coombs, 1998; Gueterbock, 2004; Hearit, 1999; Henderson, 2005; Werder, 2006). These studies limit opportunities for generalisation, but provide an in depth insight into how activists operate and make sense of their activities, particularly if multiple methods are used. However, most of the cases in public relations have been based on a single method, e.g. interviews (e.g. Anderson, 1992; McCown, 2007) or textual analysis (e.g. Demetrious, 2007, 2013; Stokes & Rubin, 2010; Weaver, 2010, 2013). Most noticeably, there is a lack of (participant) observation in activism scholarship in general, and in public relations research into activism in particular.

US-centricity in PR scholarship

To date, scholarly insights into activist communication have been largely restricted to conceptual papers (e.g. Derville, 2005; Dhir, 2007; Karagianni & Cornelissen, 2006), rather than being based on empirical data, and with a prevailing focus on the North American context (e.g. Anderson, 1992; Coombs, 1998; J. E. Grunig, 1989; J. E. Grunig & Grunig, 1997; L. A. Grunig, 1992a; Holtzhausen, 2007; McCown, 2007; Reber & Kim, 2006; Seo, et al., 2009; M. Taylor, et al., 2001). The three definitions of activism and activists on page 66 are widely quoted and unchallenged throughout public relations literature. However, all three originate in the United States of America. This further illustrates the overrepresentation of US-based scholarship in public relations literature, particularly within an activism context. In their simplified form, these definitions fail to acknowledge the role of the political, economic and social environment in which activists operate, as well as the context specific challenges they face⁹. Despite the emphasis on first world values in the existing body of literature, activist activities are prominent across the second and third world. For example, India's estimated 3.3 million non-government organisations (Shukla, 2010) undoubtedly operate differently to well-researched global NGOs, such as Greenpeace (e.g. Gueterbock, 2004; Heath, 1998). Studies that venture beyond the current focus on the corporate perspective and the US environment will enable us to

⁹ Note: the exception are critical scholars, such as Weaver (2010, 2013) and Demetrious (Demetrious, 2007, 2008b, 2013), who define activism differently.

learn more about how activists actually communicate and engage with other groups, organisations and governments. This heavy focus on US-based activism is equally reflected in other disciplines, such as Dreiling, et al's (2008) management study into environmental organisations' communication strategies or Salazar's (2009) sociological research into environmental activism. One prominent exception is the European based work of Mario Diani and Donatella Della Porta (Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Della Porta & Tarrow, 2005; Diani, 1992, 2000, 2007), with a particular focus on Italy and the UK. Their work is covered in more detail in the review of social movement research on pages 81-86. In public relations, limited insight into activism and advocacy outside the United States is gradually emerging, via studies in New Zealand (Weaver, 2010, 2013), Australia (Demetrious, 2007, 2008b, 2013), the Philippines (Sison, 2013) and Europe (Somerville & Aroussi, 2013).

To summarise, while activism PR scholarship represents a significant strand of enquiry in PR literature, insights have been largely limited to the corporate perspective. Furthermore, research has been heavily influenced by US-focused, normative theories of PR practice, which have been widely criticised for their failure to capture the dynamic characteristics of relationships at the core of public relations practice (P. A. Curtin & Gaither, 2005; Toth, 2000). There is an apparent focus on commercial and government communication at the expense of other segments of society, such as activist groups. 'Success' has been largely framed from the corporate perspective, failing to acknowledge activists' goals and objectives. PR activism scholars have commonly referred to activists and activist groups as homogenous entities, thereby ignoring the kaleidoscope of activist activities. Furthermore, they have largely advocated the identification of a win-win zone as best practice in corporation-activist engagement, failing to acknowledge that some activist groups may deliberately stay outside the zone of compromise or are not considered noteworthy enough by corporate communicators in the first place. A few critical scholars are working in this area, but are the exception to this approach. They are discussed in the next section.

A number of authors have argued that the current PR research agenda into activism is inherently flawed, particularly as it fails to acknowledge the unequal distribution of power in the activist-organisation relationship (e.g. Coombs, 1998; Coombs & Holladay, 2007; Dozier & Lauzen, 2000; R. Jones, 2002). Power, a focus of this particular study, remains largely under-theorised (Holtzhausen, 2007). I therefore draw on Bourdieu's (Bourdieu, 1977a) Theory of Practice in order to gain a better understanding of the complexity of power in the activism context. Furthermore, to

date, activism PR scholars have largely focused on well-established groups and international networks, with corporation-like structures and processes. As a result, there has been a clear lack of studies from a critical perspective, and only limited insight into the communication practices and motivations of less structured activist organisations. However, this is slowly changing, with the emergence of a critical perspective amongst PR scholars who have called on the discipline to recognise activists as communication experts in their own right. This is the focus of the following section.

The emergence of a critical perspective in activism public relations

As explored in the overview of the existing, largely US-centric PR research agenda into activism, why does it appear as if in modern Western society greater credence is given to corporate messages than to activist communication? Within this context “activists are often portrayed as the enemy of organizations and government” (Holtzhausen, 2000, p.100). This focus has been equally reflected in public relations education, which has “largely excluded any competing, marginalized, critical, or oppressed voices” (Duffy, 2000, p. 312). This emphasis arguably positions public relations as a self-serving and capitalist activity, limited to the resource rich and already powerful elements within society (e.g. Beder, 2002b; R. Burton, 2008; Stauber & Rampton, 1995). Societal recognition as a unique and essential service has been widely acknowledged as a key criterion for professional status (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006), which is something the PR industry’s professional bodies have been working towards globally. However, this largely contrasts with mainstream, public perception, where the term ‘public relations’ is frequently used with derogatory connotations, referred to as a ‘dark art’ and linked to deception (Griffin, 2011; D. Miller & Dinan, 2007; Newman & Wright, 2011; Stokes & Rubin, 2010). From this perspective it may be argued that public relations was created by the corporate sector in the middle of the 20th century with the sole aim to “thwart and subvert democratic decision making” (D. Miller & Dinan, 2007, p. 11). In the words of Hughes and Demetrious (2006):

Traditional public relations seeks to manufacture consent, rather than create genuine dialogue, and it continues to create suspicion and cynicism. (p. 100)

However, the past decade has seen the emergence of a critical school in PR research and education (see e.g. Bardhan & Weaver, 2011; Demetrious, 2013;

L'Etang, 2008; L'Etang, McKie, Snow, & Xifra, forthcoming; L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006). Critical scholars have set out to challenge the existing intrinsic assumptions in PR scholarship, by providing alternative perspectives and definitions of public relations' role in society. Most notably, they have highlighted the need for a move away from the prevailing corporation-centric, industry serving, functionalist paradigm (Demetrious, 2006; Dozier & Lauzen, 2000; Henderson, 2005; Holtzhausen, 2002; L'Etang, 2005; L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006; Leitch & Neilson, 2001; Motion & Weaver, 2005). Critical scholars have questioned the widespread assumption that public relations' focus is solely on achieving corporate goals, acknowledging that this perspective not only undermines the standing of public relations as a critical scholarly discipline in its own right, but also limits the understanding and value of professional communication in general (Coombs & Holladay, 2012b; Dozier & Lauzen, 2000). Demetrious (2013) cautions that as a practice, public relations is merely a tool, or instrument, which cannot be separated from other parts of an organisation that determine how, and for what objective, it is used. Hence, public relations can be used for various purposes beyond corporate imperatives such as shareholder value, e.g. celebrity communication (Arthurs, 2013), or health communication (Pal & Dutta, 2008).

As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, insight into the activist perspective is limited within public relations and related communications scholarship (Karagianni & Cornelissen, 2006). The emphasis in existing literature is on what corporations have done, whilst "very little [...] has been written from the activist perspective" (Kovacs, 2004, p. 346). Notable exceptions have emerged in Australia and specifically New Zealand, including Kristin Demetrious' critical first-hand insights into grassroots activism in south-west Victoria, Australia (e.g. Demetrious, 2001; Demetrious, 2002, 2006, 2007, 2008a, 2013); Judy Motion and Kay Weaver's (Motion & Weaver, 2005; Weaver, 2010, 2013) critical examination of two New Zealand-based community campaigns; and Alison Henderson's (2005) case study on the Campaign Against Genetic Engineering. However, alongside the emergence of a critical perspective in PR scholarship in general, there has been an increasing call to study specifically activist communication (e.g. Demetrious, 2006, 2013; Dozier & Lauzen, 2000; Roper, 2002; M. F. Smith & Ferguson, 2001). Critical scholars have argued that the current PR research agenda into activism is inherently flawed, with a number of authors suggesting that activists should be recognised as communications experts in their own right (e.g. Demetrious, 2002, 2007, 2013; Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Vercic, & Sriramesh, 2007; Heath & Palenchar, 2009; Karagianni &

Cornelissen, 2006; M. F. Smith & Ferguson, 2001). Coombs and Holladay (2007) argue that activism can not only “be seen ‘as’ modern public relations” (p. 52), but that activists have essentially been practising public relations for many years, long before large corporations existed (e.g. Coombs & Holladay (2007) wrote about abolitionists and temperance activists in early 19th century America, and Heath & Waymer (2009) argued that the US Anti-Slavery Movement was practising public relations). Critical PR scholars have argued that activists have long been using sophisticated communication tools and strategic capabilities that merely differ from those of modern corporate communicators, largely due to activists’ limited availability of funds. For example, 19th century Temperance activists and anti-slavery campaigners crafted powerful speeches, produced their own publications and engaged in media relations. They scanned their environment, effectively managed issues, and lobbied in favour or against proposed legislation (Coombs & Holladay, 2007; Heath & Waymer, 2009). Like corporate communications experts, they used communication as a tool to “create public awareness of a problem and support for their solutions to the problem” (Coombs & Holladay, 2007, p.63). By ignoring this rich history, PR scholars have not only gained an incomplete understanding of activist communication, but they are also essentially ignoring the ‘public’ in public relations (Karlberg, 1996). Dozier and Lauzen (2000) in particular have criticised the modern, positivist, threat-approach that has caused scholars to “overlook the heuristic merits of the ways in which activist publics are different from, rather than similar to, other constituents and stakeholders that are players in the game of public relations” (p. 8). Questioning the notion of a win-win zone as best practice, they have instead highlighted activism PR scholarship as an opportunity to theorise the problem of ‘irreconcilable differences’.

Taylor, et al (2001) argue that activist organisations are particularly important to study within the context of public relations, as they have unique communication and relationship building needs. With ‘relationships’ or ‘relations’ being at the core of public relations practice, activist groups may provide new insights into professional communication and relationship management. One such example is Stokes and Rubin’s (2010) recent case study of the struggle between a large tobacco company and the action group GASP, which concluded that activist groups successfully use corporate PR strategies and tactics while deliberately remaining outside the zone of compromise. The authors thus further challenge the theoretical application of the two-way symmetrical or mixed motive model of public relations (L. A. Grunig, et al., 2002), particularly as they found that asymmetrical approaches can be “highly

effective in winning public support against deceptive, probably harmful, organizations” (Stokes & Rubin, 2010, p. 32). As such, activist public relations can be highly successful in building relationships with a range of stakeholders, which do not necessarily have to include the corporate entity at the centre of the dispute. This further questions the notion that public relations’ primary goal is to establish mutually beneficial agreements. Instead, it can be argued that:

PR is about giving “voice” to organizations and groups holding different values, behaving differently, and promoting different interests as they seek to maximize advantage in their political economy and civil society. (Moloney, 2005, p. 551)

Within the public relations scholarly community, the focus and research interests are gradually shifting. According to Holtzhausen (2007), activists are “increasingly viewed as the true voices of democracy” (p. 364). She argues that consequently, activists’ action and behaviour could lend themselves to a new model for public relations practice. Similarly, Greenberg, Knight and Westersund (2011) credit advocacy groups’ growing understanding of and expertise in the use of public relations tools and strategies as a key reason behind the growing prominence of environmental causes in media, policy and public agendas.

Within this context, activist characteristics have increasingly been identified as potentially beneficial tools to address the sometimes questionable reputation and widespread public perception of the PR industry as being primarily concerned with manufacturing consent on behalf of corporations and government agencies. For example, whilst drawing on a postmodernist approach to PR scholarship, US scholar Derina Holzhausen has encouraged PR practitioners to become activists in their own organisation, with the intended aim of improving the ethical standing of the industry as a whole (Holtzhausen, 2007; Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002). She defines the role of the activist practitioner as serving as the “conscience in the organization by resisting dominant power structures” (Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002, p.64). In doing so, she actively re-positions the practice of public relations as no longer exclusive to management and traditional guardians of power, but as a set of tools and skills available to different facets of society in order to challenge the status quo. Similarly, Berger (2005) has prompted the industry’s professional associations to model themselves on activist organisations in order to increase the power and influence of the profession. He argues that if “public relations is to better serve society, professionals and academics may need to embrace an activist role and combine

advocacy of shared power with activism in the interest of shared power” (p. 5). Berger thereby highlights the inherent irony in allowing corporations to define what mutually beneficial relationships should consist of, as well as the intrinsic element of power in public relations, which so far has been largely limited to those with commercial interests at heart.

It is important to note that despite the growing scholarly interest in activism public relations, activists are unlikely to describe themselves as practising public relations. Although their communication skills, creative tactics and strategic campaigns may resemble those of modern public relations professionals, the term ‘public relations’ in itself is highly loaded and has “specific connotations for activists as self-serving capitalist activity deeply rooted in exploitative corporate history and tradition” (Demetrious, 2006, p. 107). Activists perceive public relations as an unethical practice used by corporations and governments to further reinforce the existing dominance of business interests (Demetrious, 2008a) over societal needs. Within this context, Demetrious introduces the concept of “new activism”, which positions activists as sophisticated communicators, rather than public relations professionals, who see it as their goal to expose traditional “PR spin” (2008a, 2008b; P. Hughes & Demetrious, 2006). New activism refers to political action undertaken by a range of diverse individuals, groups and organisations, which are tied together in a temporary alliance in order to create political change at local, national and international levels (P. Hughes & Demetrious, 2006). By drawing on literature in sociology, in particular the notion of a risk society (e.g. Beck, 1992, 2000), Demetrious indirectly suggests a possible intersection between local, often *interest-*orientated campaigns and global, issue-focused activism (see the typology suggested by M. F. Smith & Ferguson, 2001, on page 61 in this chapter). Activists may initially organise in response to a local environmental, health or lifestyle issue. However, new communication technologies, such as the Internet, enable local groups to join forces with like-minded activists from around the world, thereby forming a virtual, global, and more powerful network. Hence, Hughes and Demetrious’ concept of new activism covers established NGOs, such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International, diffused groups such as the anti-globalisation movement, and a range of small community groups. The duration of these alliances typically varies, depending on the lifecycle of the issue and communication campaign. By drawing on the example of the Otway Ranges Environment Network (OREN), an environmental grassroots movement in south west Victoria, Australia, Demetrious (2008b) illustrates how new activists expose

unethical practices inherent in traditional public relations and highlights the limitations of the win-win zone as assumed best practice. In the late 1990s-early 21st century, OREN's communication campaign resulted in changed forest practices and policy decision-making in the local Otway Ranges, due to successfully challenging the long-standing and exclusive relationship between the State government and the timber industry. The campaign itself drew on a number of strategies, from protests and boycotts to active participation in policy processes. Demetrious argues that as new activists are becoming more effective, sophisticated and organised, they increasingly expose traditional public relations – or PR spin – as an “unethical way to respond to criticism” (P. Hughes & Demetrious, 2006, p. 93). As public communicators, networks like OREN do not only highlight the multi-faceted nature of activism, but furthermore differentiate themselves from traditional public relations activities by emphasising education over persuasion and / or the manufacturing of consent (Demetrious, 2008b). As such, they arguably encourage a fairer, broader and more extensive involvement in public debate.

Despite the emergence of a critical perspective, an increased focus on activism in public relations research, and calls by critical scholars for activists to be recognised as communication professionals in their own right, firsthand accounts of activists' use of communication remain rare. Notable exceptions have been Kovacs' (2004, 2006) insight into broadcast activism and Branagan's (2005, 2007a, 2007b) mainly descriptive, self-reflective work on the use of humour in activism. Case studies of activist campaigns have traditionally focused primarily on secondary data analysis, such as media coverage and campaign materials (e.g. Coombs & Holladay, 2007; Demetrious, 2001; Gueterbock, 2004; Motion & Weaver, 2005; Stokes & Rubin, 2010; Weaver, 2010), with the inclusion of some semi-structured interviews (e.g. Demetrious, 2007; Henderson, 2005) to triangulate text-based data collection.

To summarise, the literature provides few insights into how activists conceptualise and define their work and communication efforts. Further, the literature is unable to explain how, if at all, their behaviours and communications might contrast with what they espouse in their written and verbal accounts, such as in self-publications and media interviews. However, over the past decade we have seen the emergence of a critical school of thought in public relations, and particularly in activist public relations scholarship. Critical scholars have argued that activists had been practising public relations long before modern corporations came into existence and hence suggest that activism should be recognised as modern public relations. From this perspective, PR may be seen as providing a voice for a wide range of groups

and individuals, with diverse values and interests. Some critical scholars have argued that activists should be acknowledged as communication professionals in their own right and have therefore called on their peers to recognise activists' unique communication needs. Their key argument is that by ignoring activist communication, the scholarly community can only ever gain an incomplete understanding of public relations. Additionally, they suggest that this leads to reinforcing the already dominant business orientation in public relations, thus undermining the standing of PR as a scholarly discipline in its own right.

Critical scholars have therefore questioned the notion of a compromise as best practice in corporation-activist communication, as reinforced in the traditional, corporation centric literature, and instead highlighted activism as an opportunity to theorise the concept of irreconcilable differences. Despite the increased recognition of activists' communication needs and abilities, it is crucial to keep in mind that the term public relations is highly loaded, particularly within an activism context, where PR is widely perceived as a self-serving capitalist activity that reinforces the interests of those already powerful in society. Demetrious (2008a, 2008b; P. Hughes & Demetrious, 2006) introduced the concept of new activism in public relations literature, which refers to the temporary alliance between different groups and individuals, who can be described as professional communicators with the goal of exposing what they perceive as "PR spin". Within this context the emphasis is on education, rather than persuasion, as new activists encourage informed involvement in public debate.

With the exception of Saul Alinsky's *Reveille for Radicals* (Alinsky, 1946, 1971) (e.g. Jaques, 2006; M. F. Smith, 2005) activist authored publications have been largely ignored in PR activism literature. The following section of this literature review provides a summary of the types of publications that have been authored by or are aimed at activists.

Activist literature

Literature written by and for activists largely consists of 'how to' manuals, both in book form (see e.g. Huenefeld, 1970; Mondros & Wilson, 1994; Prokosch & Raymond, 2002; Shaw, 1996) and increasingly as an online resource (see e.g. Protest.net, 2008; The Change Agency), providing 'concerned citizens', community organisers and self-declared activists with inspirational case studies and practical advice about how to challenge corporations, mobilise the community, and utilise

online tools. Hence, the focus is on the empowerment of “ordinary citizens” (Mondros & Wilson, 1994). Topics covered range from recruitment of members or volunteers and consensus-based decision making to publicity and fundraising. Arguably, the best known texts are Saul Alinsky’s 1946 political action manual *Reveille for Radicals*, followed three decades later by *Rules for Radicals* (1971, 1989), in which the American community organiser and writer outlined his ideas for mass mobilisation:

What follows is for those who want to change the world from what it is to what they believe it should be. The Prince was written by Machiavelli for the Haves on how to hold power. *Rules for Radicals* is written for the Have-Nots on how to take it away. (p. 3)

Alinsky’s ideas were noticeably confrontational, rather than cooperative, adding further doubt over the existence of a win-win zone and activists’ interest in negotiating a compromise with the ‘Haves’; that is, with the traditionally powerful, well-resourced entities in a given society, such as corporations or governments. In doing so, he encourages activists to challenge existing power relationships. In the absence of substantial economic means, his books provide activists with the tools to identify alternative resources to aid their demand for a re-distribution of power in their favour. Over six decades later, Alinsky’s ideas continue to be referred to widely, both in activist resources (e.g. The Change Agency, <http://www.thechangeagency.org>) and in scholarly activism PR literature (e.g. Branagan, 2007b; Jaques, 2006; M. F. Smith, 2005).

A major stream of activist literature consists of campaign records, often illustrated with the aid of first-hand accounts by key activists and photos (e.g. N. Brown, 2005; Kearns, 2004; McIntyre, 2008; Svenson, 1989; Willett, 2000). These publications have two aims: to inspire non-participants and – arguably most importantly – allow campaign contributors to re-live challenges and celebrate highlights. The documentation of their work, usually with the help of small, independent publishers, such as Melbourne’s Breakdown Press, provides activists with a rare opportunity to reflect on past activities, evaluate their successes, and re-energise (Branagan, 2007b). Campaign records are usually characterised by a strong emphasis on humour, depicting a dichotomy between the serious, business-like approach of corporations and activists’ creativity, courage and optimistic attitude, despite their position as ‘underdog’ (e.g. McIntyre, 2009; McIntyre, et al., 2009; Munro, et al., 1996). Activists’ documentation of conflict and their “Us vs. Them” interpretation of

events arguably help to develop and shape a sense of collective identity amongst activists.

Interest-focused, science-based literature provides the backbone for activist campaigns. Ensuring the factual correctness of information material and having sufficient contextual knowledge is crucial to engaging in meaningful exchanges with industry representatives, governments, the media and other interested parties. Within the anti-nuclear context, the work of the Australian-born physician and Nobel Prize nominee Dr Helen Caldicott, has been a major influence (e.g. Caldicott, 1978, 1986, 2002; 2006, 2009). On her website she describes herself as a “passionate advocate of citizen action” and “arguably the most well-known anti-nuclear campaigner on the planet”, whilst emphasising her dedication to public education regarding medical nuclear-related health hazards (Caldicott, 2012).

However, as important factual knowledge may be to ensure the success of activist campaigns, so is the emotional support for and continued mental wellbeing of activists. The work by the American ‘eco philosopher’ Joanna Macy has been one of the major influences in anti-nuclear activism (<http://www.joannamacy.net/>). Her workshops and publications on despair and personal empowerment in the nuclear age (e.g. Macy, 1983) are widely referred to amongst anti-nuclear activists.

In summary, there is a wealth of literature that provides activists with ‘how to’ tips and cause-specific expertise, as well as with coping strategies to ensure continued emotional wellbeing. However, in contrast to activist public relations literature, the majority of texts lack critical analysis of activists’ activities, but instead focus on tools to overcome existing power imbalances between corporations and governments on the one side, and activists on the other. The documenting of past campaigns and in particular insights into uplifting, humorous elements appear to play a major role in this context. Noticeably, activists do not refer to themselves as practising public relations in their own publications. Instead, they are essentially mirroring the Excellence School of Thought’s positioning of public relations, by limiting it to practices performed by corporations and governments in an attempt to undermine, isolate and disarm activists. Activist literature, in particular narrations of past campaigns, emphasises an Us vs. Them perspective, thereby further raising the question of the existence of a win-win zone and activists’ interest in negotiating any form of compromise with corporations. On- and off-line publications define activists’ role as advocates of active citizenship, thereby clearly differentiating themselves from corporations, by emphasising education, rather than persuasion. As such,

activists' implied role is that of a facilitator, striving to equip society with the tools and knowledge necessary to ensure active participation in political debate and democratic decision making.

Whilst public relations scholarship has so far provided limited insight into the activist perspective and activists' communication, networking and resource needs, social movement scholars have built an extensive body of knowledge that reflects the varied nature of activism and provides an insight into key challenges from the activist perspective. The following section discusses relevant key concepts in social movement theory.

Social movement theory

As a relatively young scholarly discipline, the field of public relations provides only a limited number of theoretical and conceptual tools. Consequently, PR researchers have incorporated theories from related subject areas, such as politics (e.g. Tesh, 1984) and the social sciences. Public relations scholars concerned with activism have drawn on a number of related constructs such as postmodernism (e.g. Holtzhausen, 2000, 2002, 2007; Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002), and applied a range of theories, for example stakeholder theory (e.g. Coombs, 1998), situational theory (e.g. J. E. Grunig & Grunig, 1997; Werder, 2006), framing theory (e.g. Reber, et al., 2010) and the notion of a risk society (e.g. Demetrious, 2002, 2006; R. Jones, 2002). Recently a handful of PR scholars have turned to social movement theory to inform their work (e.g. Karagianni & Cornelissen, 2006; Kovacs, 2004; M. F. Smith & Ferguson, 2001) and expand the understanding of activist communication beyond the dominant business focus. According to traditional PR literature, publics only come into existence once they have been identified and acknowledged as such by an organisation (Leitch & Neilson, 2001). Social movement literature has addressed activism and collective action from a different perspective, by acknowledging activists' existence as separate social identities, independent of organisations (Karagianni & Cornelissen, 2006). Whilst public relations scholars have traditionally focused on managing activists and limiting outrage (e.g. Deegan, 2001), social movement scholars have been interested in understanding why social mobilisation occurs in the first place (e.g. Crossley, 2002; Haluza-DeLay, 2008; Klandermans & Staggenborg, 2002), as well as how movements are maintained over a period of time (e.g. Cox, 2009; La Rocca, 2004). Social movement theory is in itself an interdisciplinary field, positioned within the social sciences, which in contrast to PR

literature looks beyond the immediate business implications by investigating potential social, cultural and political consequences.

Social movements have a rich history, which can be traced back several centuries. Classical examples include the French Revolution¹⁰ and the British Abolitionists (Coombs & Holladay, 2007). Social movement studies has been considered a part of the disciplines of politics and sociology, but it gained increased attention as a scholarly discipline in its own right when a wave of social protests emerged in post-World War II Europe and continued to spread around the globe by the late 1960s. These included the student protests in Europe and the pro-democracy mobilisations in Spain and Czechoslovakia (Prague), as well as the American civil rights and antiwar movements (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Not only was there a greater number of protests, but furthermore a shift in activists' focus, from economic wellbeing to wider issues (Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Diani, 1992). Traditionally, social movements focused on labour concerns and workers' rights (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Post-industrial era "New Social Movements" (NSMs), however, were less interested in material favours and instead increasingly concerned with lifestyle, and moral, social and equity issues (Burgmann, 2003; Lichterman, 1998). This shift paved the way for women's rights, gay rights, peace, and green movements, including anti-nuclear activism. In Australia the feminist and green movements were particularly visible during the 1970s and 1980s, eventually leading – inter alia – to the formation of the Australian Greens Party (Burgmann, 2003; Kearns, 2004). Social movement research has since developed into a well-established discipline in its own right, with specialised journals, book series and professional associations. Rather than being a phase or trend associated with a certain period in history, Della Porta and Diani (2006) argue that grassroots activism and social movements "have become a permanent component of Western democracies" (p. 1).

Prior to World War II, social movements were primarily associated with the working classes. However, today they increasingly consist of representatives from the middle classes, including academics and intellectuals, such as Noam Chomsky and Pierre Bourdieu. Frey and Carragee (2007) go a step further by emphasising activism not only as a research perspective, but also an active 'responsibility' of communication scholars to engage in direct action in support of social change, by practicing what they label "communication activism".

¹⁰ Even though arguably it might also be referred to as a violent revolt by the nation's Third Estate against the established governance of France

The much quoted Spanish sociologist and social movement researcher Manuel Castells defines social movements as:

Purposive collective action aimed at changing the dominant values and institutions of society on behalf of the values and interests that are meaningful for the actors of the movement. (Castells, 2011, p.109)

From a social movement approach, activists' *raison d'être* is to question and challenge the status quo. In order to be heard, they may apply confrontational and socially disruptive tactics, such as sit-ins, protest marches, lock downs of buildings and the closure of roads. Rather than emphasising the stark contrast with corporate tactics, or dismissing these protest methods as unprofessional or ineffective, Zirakzadeh (1997) referred to them as a "style of politics that supplements or replaces conventional political activities, like lobbying or working for a political party" (pp. 4-5). Social movement scholars thus recognise the strategic dimensions of activism, as opposed to interpreting actions as emotional outbursts of discontent, as frequently suggested within the realm of public relations. From this perspective, activism may be seen as "purposive collective actions whose outcome, in victory as in defeat, transform the values and institutions of society" (Castells, 1997, p. 3). Castells thereby challenges the definition of 'success', and in particular the notion of a win-win zone as the preferred result in activist communication. Instead, he moves attention away from outcomes, and onto the actions themselves. Through the social movement lens, successful activist communication is less about persuasion than education; it is not about coercion, but the act of challenging the status quo. This re-defines activists' roles as the providers of tools that enable informed decision making and hence actively shape society.

The term 'movement' indicates that activists are involved in more than a mere protest. Instead, it suggests a certain duration or lifecycle, beyond a single, one off event (Hart, 2007). As Burgmann notes: "A social movement is not a static group, but an enduring process of confrontation characterised by capacity for protest" (Burgmann, 2003, p. 4).

Contrary to protest groups that are usually focused on a single issue and frequently locally focused, social movements have a longer lifecycle, as they are preoccupied with changes on a national or even international scale, which relate to their personal beliefs and ideals. Furthermore, contrary to the widespread assumption in public relations literature, where activists have traditionally been neatly bundled into one of an organisation's stakeholder groups, social movement scholars (e.g. Della Porta &

Diani, 2006; Melucci, 2000) emphasise that movements are not homogenous entities, but characterised by a plurality of perspectives and relationships within any given collective. Social movements can involve people from a broad range of social backgrounds, who seek an outlet for political expression, not restricted to, but including, the non-powerful, non-wealthy and non-famous (Zirakzadeh, 1997). Supporters may come from different walks of life, but are tied together via a common purpose and commitment to challenge the interests and beliefs of those in positions of power (Tarrow, 2005), in particular political power holders, or widespread cultural beliefs and practices (Goodwin & Jasper, 2003). As such, social movement activists may acknowledge a common interest, but are essentially what Burgmann (2003) refers to as “‘imagined communities’ of the oppressed, disadvantaged and threatened” (p. 4). This may clarify Gamson’s (1975) findings that single issue groups tend to be more successful than multiple issue groups, by arguably allowing them to be more focused in their messaging and campaign intensity.

Moreover, individual activists are not necessarily associated with one group alone. Most public relations scholarship to date has overlooked the complexities of the types of activism people are involved in and the “multiple spaces they inhabit” (Wilkinson, 2009, p. 2). Although social movements are organised, they are essentially anti-systemic or non-institutional (Burgmann, 2003; Goodwin & Jasper, 2003). They are informal, loosely organised networks of supporters, rather than ‘member organisations’, which means their actual make-up is in a constant state of flux as people join, leave and move on to other causes. In the absence of a membership fee or set term of commitment, supporters join in when they are motivated by particular initiatives and have sufficient personal resources available. As a result, a movement may grow rapidly and gain momentum if there is a perceived high level of urgency; however, they may also diminish equally as quickly.

Over the past decade, (collective) identity and emotion have increasingly emerged as themes in social movement theory (e.g. G. Brown & Pickerill, 2009a, 2009b; Castells, 1997; Hart, 2007; Wilkinson, 2009). Rather than a sign of weakness to be frowned upon, emotion – including outrage, despair and humour – has increasingly been recognised as a crucial element of social protest: “Frustration, fear, anger, alienation and joy are taken into serious consideration. Emotions are not linked solely to personal psychologies but to social networks, shared cultural meanings, and collective identities” (Hart, 2007, p. 11).

Social movement researchers have argued that an awareness of the importance of emotions can enrich the overall comprehension of a movement's "emergence, trajectories, and decline" (Flesher Fominaya, 2007, p. 258). Supporters' mental and physical well-being in particular is linked to the potential of 'burn out' and the sustainability of the movement in general (Cox, 2009). Personal sustainability as a concept includes activist's workplace situations, support networks, financial resources [and] physical vulnerability, all of which determine an individual's ability to "take up and maintain effective involvement in informal politics" (Cox, 2009, p. 53). Within this context, researchers have paid particular attention to the notion of humour as a crucial element of effective social protest (e.g. Flesher Fominaya, 2007; Hart, 2007; Hart & Bos, 2007; J. C. Meyer, 2000; Roy, 2000; Sawchuk, 2009), going as far as labelling humour as "weapon of the weak" (Hart, 2007, p. 16). They argue that humour and laughter have traditionally served as a powerful tool in social protest, by constructing a strong sense of unity (Hart, 2007) that contributes to the development of a collective identity. Furthermore, humour is an education tool, ensuring key messages are succinct and memorable (Hart & Bos, 2007; J. C. Meyer, 2000). However, most importantly, it has the potential to defuse tensions, resolve conflict, and integrate marginal group members (Flesher Fominaya, 2007), thereby ensuring the long-term viability of the movement.

Burgmann (2003) emphasises the symbiotic relationship that exists between the movement and its participants: "A movement is defined by the aspirations of its supporters, yet the image of the movement becomes part of the self-identity of its adherents" (Burgmann, 2003, p. 6).

Social movement activists are driven by their personal beliefs, passions and interpretation of what is right and wrong. Whilst these actively shape the nature, positioning and identity of the movement as a whole, the collective sense of identity equally influences individuals' understanding and interpretation of their self. Activists can forge a collective identity inscribed through particular behaviours, dress sense, use of language and practices (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Brown and Pickerill (2009b) argue that the purpose of this shared identity is to create powerful bonds between participants, which at least temporarily "outweigh the potential cost of taking part in collective action" (p. 25). Hence, emotion is a crucial element in building cohesion within and ensuring the long-term sustainability of activist networks. For example, Bosco (2001) illustrates how a group of human rights activists in Argentina successfully maintained both a profile and pressure on authorities over a period of more than two decades. By drawing on shared feelings

of loss and a re-definition of motherhood, as well as the maintenance of weekly rituals, Madres de Plaza de Mayo established a strong collective identity and emotional bonds despite the geographic dispersion of different groups of madres.

In summary, social movement theory provides an alternative perspective on the role of activism in society. Contrary to PR literature, social movement scholars are less concerned about business implications than the wider social, cultural and political consequences of activism. From this viewpoint, activists are no longer confined to their role as trouble-makers and initiators of corporate issue management programs. Instead, they are seen to play a crucial role in society by equipping citizens with the tools and information needed to participate in informed decision making. As such, social movement scholars have truly challenged the notion of a win-win zone as best practice in corporation-activist engagement. Instead, success is no longer limited to campaign outcomes, but to the actual process of being active and challenging the status quo.

Social movement theory indirectly highlights the shortcomings of activist public relations research, by illustrating the heterogeneous nature of social movements and activist groups, as well as the plurality of activists' backgrounds, perspectives and motivations. Public relations literature has traditionally grouped activists into one of many stakeholder groups neatly clustered around a corporate entity. However, social movement scholars have illustrated that it would not only be too simplistic, but arguably misleading if activists were neatly classified as an artificial category with assumed similar characteristics. Social movements lack corporate structures and hierarchies, and are constantly evolving. Contrary to assumptions engrained in public relations literature, they exist independently of corporations and can mobilise at short notice. The ideas of social movement scholars therefore challenge the traditional stakeholder model, because they are not primarily focused on the relationship of activists to a central, dominant corporate entity. Instead, their focal point is society and the empowerment of ordinary citizens, by removing the power from the 'haves' and transferring at least some of it to the 'have-nots' by means of education.

Recognising how activists' are embedded within society, the following section of the literature provides an insight into the environmental factors that may influence activism and the context in which it occurs.

Context

In analysing activism from a PR or social movement perspective, a number of scholars have pointed to the importance of understanding the context in which activism occurs, as the media, societal values and beliefs have a significant influence on the extent of power leveraged by activist groups and therefore their success in influencing a transformation in society (e.g. Motion & Weaver, 2005; Weaver, 2013). Here, the scholarly focus has been predominantly on the role new and traditional media play within an activism context. The following paragraphs provide an overview of relevant insights gained to date.

A number of public relations scholars have suggested that the media provide activists with power over organisations (e.g. L. A. Grunig, 1992a; Holtzhausen, 2000), principally by using media coverage as a tool to pressurise governments into forcing change upon corporations (Holtzhausen, 2007). They argue that in particular, the mainstream media favour storylines that draw on a David vs. Goliath analogy. This theory is illustrated in a recent study by García (2011), which concluded that during the ten year conflict between British Petroleum (BP) and Greenpeace, the environmental organisation was framed more positively in the media than its corporate counterpart: “Greenpeace was attributed the role of the watchdog, the protector of a helpless environment, and the underdog that continually challenged evil oil companies” (García, 2011, p. 58).

As such, the media framed activists as heroes and guardians of social justice. By meeting public expectations, rebellious acts became justifiable. However, the role of the media as a ‘power granting’ tool, and the assumption that “media coverage conveys legitimacy” (J. E. Grunig & Grunig, 1997, p. 3; L. A. Grunig, 1992a, p. 510) has been increasingly questioned (Holtzhausen, 2007). For example, Holtzhausen (2007) has acknowledged that the media landscape is changing. Within a public relations context the term ‘media’ has been largely associated with traditional media outlets, such as broadcast and print media. However, over the past decades ‘traditional’ media landscapes have undergone a dramatic transformation. Increasing audience fragmentation has seen viewer and readership figures gradually declining (Holtzhausen, 2007). Noticeably, outside the field of public relations, scholars have perceived the media in opposition to, rather than as an ally of, activists, arguing that they “often systematically distort, negatively cast or ignore social movement viewpoints” (Stein, 2009, p. 750). Instead, scholars contend that the media provides a “distinct advantage to those with power, prestige, money,

social ties and organisational capacity (e.g. government agencies and departments, large corporations) in getting their message across” (Greenberg, et al., 2011, p. 69).

Over the past decade, the introduction of electronic, new media and, most recently, social media, has resulted in increased attention on activist communication (e.g. W. L. Bennett, 2003; Blood, 2001; Bob, 2001, 2005; Coombs, 1998; Dreiling, et al., 2008; Elliot, 1997; Hearit, 1999; Heath, 1998; Illia, 2003; Lester & Hutchins, 2009; Pickerill, 2003; Reber & Kim, 2006; Roper, 2002; Seo, et al., 2009; E. J. Sommerfeldt, 2011; Sommerfeldt, Kent, & Taylor, 2012; Stein, 2009; M. Taylor, et al., 2001; Waters, et al., 2009). PR and media scholars have raised the possibility that these new communication channels may address and potentially even equalise the existing power inequalities between traditionally well-resourced corporations and resource poor activist groups (e.g. Bray, 1998; Bunting & Lipski, 2001; Coombs, 1998; Heath, 1998; Jaques, 2006; Mazzini, 2004). Coombs (1998) goes as far to argue that as a result of the introduction of online technologies, the traditional stakeholder map has been redefined, seeing activists move beyond the powerless categories they had traditionally been placed in. Has the emergence of the Internet truly revolutionised activism, as argued by scholars such as Smith (2005)? New technologies arguably remove the need for substantial financial resources to win the activist-organisation battle over whose voice is being heard, ultimately providing an opportunity to influence the status quo. In the words of Heath (1998), when new media is involved, “deep pockets do not play a key role in getting information out to interested readers” (p. 273). The emergence of the Internet has arguably enabled activist groups to bypass corporate media news filters by disseminating alternative news directly to the public via new and social media tools (Roper, 2002). Technology may furthermore provide more convenient and timely networking channels to liaise with likeminded groups (Coombs, 1998), and opportunities to leverage the spread or novelty of new technologies to gain access to mainstream media (Lester & Hutchins, 2009; Seo, et al., 2009). However, whilst new channels such as blogs provide activists with new opportunities, we are seeing a further fragmentation of the media landscape and, consequently, decreasing audience figures for each platform, which limit the reach for both activist and organisational messages (Holtzhausen, 2007). The critical scholar Demetrious (2011) categorically disagrees with the power-levelling characteristics bestowed upon new technologies, arguing that instead of reducing inequalities, new technologies “have provided oxygen to the rather tarnished occupation of public relations” (p. 118). She claims that social media provide organisations with increased opportunities to control and

influence publics, albeit in a more covert way. Demetrious uses the example of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, which at first glance resemble transparent, welcoming communal spaces. However, as public relations professionals develop their ability to manage online communication in a concealed way, it has become increasingly difficult for citizens to identify and resist their attempts to persuade, and create what Habermas (1995) refers to as 'self-serving public consent'.

Do new technologies facilitate the creation of a digital democracy, or have entrenched power relations remained firmly in place? Either way, it is irrefutable that over the past decade, the communication environment has changed dramatically, with consequences for the engagement with dispersed members of activist organisations, as well as the formation of wider networks. One of the first studies that emerged to highlight the impact of new technologies in relation to PR / managed communication was Rutherford's (2000) case study of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL). Still in the early days of the World Wide Web, the campaign team recognised the potential of then newly emerging email technologies, enabling it to grow a coalition that comprised more than 1400 NGOs from over 70 countries. The landmine case illustrates how the Internet can help increase NGO capabilities to develop larger, global coalitions, reduce cost and increase international exposure. However, mirroring trends in general public relations literature, some scholars (e.g. Lester & Hutchins, 2009) have cautioned that new and social media do not change the basics of communication, but rather add an additional device to an activist group's strategic toolbox. Furthermore, a number of authors (e.g. Seo, et al., 2009; Stein, 2009; Waters, et al., 2009) have recently pointed out that despite its potential, new technologies have remained largely underutilised by not-for-profit and activist organisations, which have been credited with a lack of training and resources to allow constant monitoring and updates.

Despite the prominent interest in technology-aided activist communication, the current body of knowledge is characterised by a number of shortcomings. First, much of the literature that promotes the benefits of 'new' media as a power levelling tool fails to include the activist perspective. There is a dominance of secondary web/content analyses (e.g. Demetrious, 2011; Derville, 2005; Roper, 2002; Stein, 2009; Waters, et al., 2009), surveys/questionnaires (e.g. Dreiling, et al., 2008; Seo, et al., 2009) and, as prevalent throughout activist public relations scholarship, conceptual papers (e.g. Heath, 1998; Jaques, 2006), rather than empirical studies

that examine how activists use and make sense of new technological tools. Furthermore, much of the research into the relationship between activism and media coverage is based on the underlying assumption that effective media relations are a key objective of activist organisations. For example, Reber and Kim's (2006) study into the effectiveness of activists groups' use of websites in building relationships with key media indirectly assumes that activist groups have comparable objectives, tools and resources to the corporate entities they are challenging. Consequently, within a public relations context there is an apparent lack of insight into activists' actual motivations and skill sets, beyond the analysis of outputs (websites) and outcomes (media coverage). Next, whilst activist networks may increasingly adopt basic online tools, they may also simply lack the necessary knowledge as well as financial and human resources to invest in more advanced features (Stein, 2009). Lastly, social movement scholars have identified the potential drawbacks of computer-mediated communication for what they refer to as traditional movement activities—such as building trust, a sense of community amongst members and commitment—when not reinforced by offline relationships (Calhoun, 1998; Diani, 2000). As a result, what becomes increasingly apparent is the ineffectiveness of examining activist communication (whether web-based or traditional) based on the application of existing corporate knowledge, standards and best practice examples. This is because such research fails to acknowledge resource discrepancies and activists' uniqueness, and essentially undermines public relations' aims to establish itself as a critical scholarly discipline in its own right.

Reflecting the interest of the mainstream PR research agenda, insights into activists' use of traditional and new media have primarily focused on North America (e.g. Hearit, 1999; Heath, 1998; E. Sommerfeldt, 2011; Sommerfeldt, et al., 2012; M. Taylor, et al., 2001). With the rise of social media tools circumventing traditional – and often state-run – media, activist grassroots action in North Africa, Asia and the Middle East has recently gained worldwide attention. The issue of whether or not 'new' and social media technologies have in fact transformed the terms of civic engagement in a positive way is still widely debated (e.g. A. Burns & Eltham, 2009; Zhang & Tomlinson, 2012). However, digital technologies have undoubtedly raised the profile of a number of non-Western movements and causes. For example, social media has been credited for playing a major role in the wave of civic uprisings that have spread across the Arab World since late 2010, from Tunisia, Egypt and Libya to Iraq, Jordan and Kuwait (Harb, 2011; J. Jones, 2011; Stepanova, 2011; Youmans & York, 2012), in what has been labelled the 'Arab Spring' (Haseeb, 2011). The

micro-blogging site Twitter in particular has been hailed as a key tool, empowering Iranian citizens to express their discontent and publicly challenge national election outcomes (A. Burns & Eltham, 2009; Gaffney, 2010; Grossman, 2009; Newman, 2009; Shirky, 2011). Simultaneously, Chinese activists have increasingly made use of web logs to share their views, voice concerns and influence future decision making (Yang, 2009; Zhang & Tomlinson, 2012). However, despite clear evidence that second and third world citizens are equally as active as public advocates as their first world neighbours, they have to date been largely ignored in public relations research, particularly within the activism context.

Societal context

The recognition of the political and societal environment is particularly relevant when studying the perception and acceptance of activism within a particular social context (Motion & Weaver, 2005). Holtzhausen (2007) argues that the crediting of 'power' depends on the values of the environment: "If societies value their market economies more than their people and environment, one can assume that activists' interest will also be less valued than those of corporations" (p. 371). As highlighted throughout this chapter, most PR research into activism has been carried out in Western societies that have subscribed to a neoliberal agenda, characterised by a focus on capitalism, free enterprise and increased corporate power. This suggests that research designs and the interpretation of findings may have been tainted by these environmental values, hence influencing the interpretation of the role activists play in society. The PR activism research agenda has remained largely focused on activists' impact on corporate performance, failing to recognise activists' communication abilities and achievements in relation to the promotion of civic engagement and societal change.

Agenda Setting Theory (McCombs & Ghanem, 2001) argues that the media play a crucial part in initiating debate and shaping public opinion by deciding which stories are considered newsworthy, how much space is given to them, and most crucially, how they are framed. However, the news agenda itself is influenced by societal values and ownership. This wider understanding and social framing may be particularly relevant within the West Australian context. As discussed in Chapter 2, at the time when this research was undertaken, the State was driven by a mining and resources boom, which was largely credited for Australia's continuing economic health. Arguably, there may be a conflict between the economic and conservative

frames (e.g. tax contributions and employment) vs. Indigenous land rights and environmental heritage, which play out in the media through the content of news stories. As illustrated, Australian media ownership is among the most concentrated in the Western world (P. Jones & Pusey, 2008). Manne (2005) argues that the dominance of News International, over the mainstream press in particular, has a “profound effect on the character of the Australian political culture” (p. 2) and consequently the way activist groups are represented, as well as their share of voice. Due to this concentration, Australian media play a major role in constraining democratic decision making by actively limiting voices and diversity. Within the West Australian context it may be justified to further query the notion of activists as ‘well loved underdogs’ (García, 2011) that are automatically granted media support. As common for mainstream media, the State’s single daily newspaper heavily relies on advertising revenue. Indeed, advertising within the main, as well as within the professional job section, reflects the dominance of resources and mineral companies in the State, which in turn questions the editorial commitment to cover activist campaigns that may be critical of industry developments and practices.

The importance of the social, political and economic context to the success of activist campaigns is illustrated when taking a closer look at existing social movement studies into anti-nuclear activism. For example, Miller’s in-depth, comparative analysis of three anti-nuclear movements in the Boston Area (B. A. Miller, 2000) led him to conclude that the geographical context has direct consequences for the success and failures of activist campaigns. He emphasised the need for “appropriate place-sensitive rhetorical strategies” (p. 172) that reflect each community’s values and minimises “threats to people’s everyday material existence” (p. 172). Similarly, Dawson (1996) dedicated an entire book to anti-nuclear activism in Russia, Lithuania and the Ukraine during the ‘perestroika’ period, arguing that the movements in each of the three countries were driven less by environmental and anti-nuclear convictions, than by anti-Soviet sentiments and a resentment towards Moscow’s domination of the region. He concludes that anti-nuclear activism provided the means to further strengthen national identities in opposition to the Moscow rule, thereby explaining the movement’s substantial decline after the fall of the Iron Curtain in the late 1980s and the consequent independence of the former Eastern Bloc states in the early 1990s. Equally taking the wider context into account, Joppke (1991) examined the perceived decline of the anti-nuclear movement in West Germany and the US, arguing that the cause

had been largely replaced by a broader focus on peace and disarmament.¹¹ Finally, the recent reframing of nuclear energy as the solution to climate change (see Chapter 2) has attracted the attention of media studies scholars, such as Doyle (2011) who analysed the media coverage in response to the UK Labour party's so-called 'U-turn' on decommissioning all power stations by 2025. She illustrates that the successful reframing of nuclear power as low carbon and the rebranding of "nuclear as less risky than climate change" (p. 107) was reliant on the political environment, supported by the dominant governmental discourse and driven by an underlying neoliberal agenda.

As illustrated in Chapter 2, the anti-nuclear movement has performed a crucial role in the Australian psyche since the late 1960s due to its long-term action and visibility,. However, both Muetzefeldt (1981) and Grenfell (2001) have questioned the anti-nuclear movement's strategic capabilities, suggesting that self-claimed successes may have been the result of societal sentiment and economic factors. An example is the closure of the Jabiluka mine in the Northern Territory, which Grenfell (2001) credits largely to economic decisions rather than to the activists' eight months' blockade. In her analysis of power, profit and protest in the Australian context, Burgman has acknowledged the increasing corporate and political influence on Australian anti-nuclear and other green activists (2003). Her work arguably emphasises the changing context in which activists are operating, which in turn may provide an explanation for the ageing of the WA anti-nuclear movement. The Australian Government appears to have noticed a change in public sentiment and economic priorities, which has recently lead to the commissioning of an Australian Research Council study into the current level of opposition to nuclear energy in Australia (Stehlik, 2010). This study particularly focuses on the wider societal context, that is how attitudes and opinions may be swayed in the context of global warming (Kowal, 2011).

These examples illustrate the level of analysis and insight that can be gained when anti-nuclear activism is analysed within the wider social, political and economic context, rather than limiting the focus to corporate perceptions of activists' success, as is prevalent in activist PR literature. Neoliberalism has positioned organisations in a position of power in relation to both the State and citizens of civil societies. These ingrained power relationships need to be recognised when analysing the success and realistic capabilities of movements.

¹¹ Note: At least in Germany, mass mobilisation in the early 21st century has since disproven this theory (see e.g. Deutsche Welle, 2003; Dowling, 2008; Gerhardt, 2010).

In summary, social movement scholars have challenged the widespread assumption in traditional PR activism literature that sees activists gain favourable media coverage as a result of their 'underdog' status. Critical scholars, such as Demetrious, have further questioned the power-equalising characteristics of new and social media, arguing that they are further re-enforcing entrenched power relationships between well-resourced and trained corporate representatives on one side and resource-poor activists on the other. Scholars have therefore emphasised the need to analyse discourses within the context of their political, economic and social environment, something that has been largely ignored in the traditional Western-focused, corporation-centric PR activism research agenda, but which has in contrast motivated research by social movement scholars. As illustrated in this study so far, the West Australian society has been shaped by a limited media landscape, feelings of indebtedness towards the mining industry and a high regard for the neoliberal agenda of the Australian government, which in turn influences the way activist activities are seen, interpreted and reported in the media. This environment emphasises power discrepancies between activists and corporations and/or governments, and provides a novel research environment to investigate how activists communicate and challenge the status quo.

Chapter Summary

Research into activism represents a prominent body of knowledge in the public relations literature. However, the research agenda has to date largely focused on issue management and damage limitation, influenced by the discipline's overall dominant business orientation. Instead of looking at activists as communicators in their own right, practitioner literature in particular has largely positioned activists as trouble-makers in opposition to corporate goals. The research agenda has traditionally been characterised by a strong focus on the US context, conceptual papers and the corporate perspective. Case studies of and empirical research into activist groups has been largely limited to established, high profile, international NGOs, which in terms of structure and communication needs are similar to those of corporations. Whilst this emphasis may be characterised as a convenience approach driven by traditional stakeholder modelling, it has led to the exclusion of other forms of activism, such as grassroots and community groups, and to the implied assumption that activist organisations are homogenous entities.

At the core of PR scholarship's best practice recommendations in organisation-activist engagement is the flawed notion of a 'win-win' zone, or the negotiation of a

compromise as a sign of truly excellent public relations. However, this assumption fails to acknowledge not only the unequal distribution of power and resources between corporations and activists groups, but furthermore the fact that many activist campaigns may be driven by irrevocable differences and potentially even a lack of interest in any engagement with corporate representatives. Hence, what has become increasingly apparent is the ineffectiveness of examining activist communication based on the application of existing corporate knowledge, standards and best practice.

Over the past decade, a critical school of thought has emerged in public relations research, resulting particularly in critical research into activist public relations. A number of scholars have argued that activism may be seen as modern public relations, claiming that activists have been practising what is now referred to as public relations for hundreds of years. However, the implied assumption that activists have similar communication goals, needs and tools to those of corporations fails to recognise the unique communication requirements and skill sets of activists. Again, activists have been studied based on how they are similar to, rather than different from, corporate PR departments. Based on this literature review, it may be argued that the activism PR research agenda to date has been over simplified and potentially even misleading, based on the inadvertent assumption that activists have similar needs, requirements, resources and goals to those of corporate PR departments.

In contrast, the literature review has shown that activists perceive public relations as a self-serving, capitalist activity, carried out by resource-rich corporations and governments. In their own publications they clearly differentiate themselves from corporations by emphasising education over persuasion. The review has also shown that activists imply the communication role is that of a facilitator and educator, with the aim to foster active civic engagement and societal change. As such, their self-defined role in society differs sharply from that bestowed upon them by traditional PR literature. They may be sophisticated communicators, but they do not refer to themselves as practicing public relations.

Two concepts have emerged from this literature review that are particularly pertinent to this study. First, Kristin Demetrious' (2008a, 2008b; P. Hughes & Demetrious, 2006) introduction of 'new activism', which positions activists as sophisticated communicators, who – rather than defining themselves as PR practitioners - see it as their goal to expose traditional PR spin. New activism may be particularly

relevant within the context of the WA ANM, as it refers to temporary alliances by a wide range of diverse individuals, groups and organisations in order to create political change. This definition broadly aligns with the second concept: social movements. Social movement theory is a well-established discipline in its own right that provides an alternative approach to the scholarly investigation of activism. Within this context emotion is perceived as a crucial element of protest, rather than a weakness. Social movement researchers have furthermore emphasised the importance of identity, the organic nature of movements and – noticeably – the heterogenic nature of activism, thereby providing the basis for a fresh approach to activism research in public relations. Critical or not, PR literature has provided no studies that have been conducted on the communication activities of activists from their own perspective, where the researcher was working inside the activist organisation. Insights into activist communication are therefore largely based on secondary research. This has emerged as a key gap in activism PR scholarship and hence is addressed in this study.

Critical scholars have argued that in order to understand how PR activism is influencing contemporary public debate, the PR community needs to outgrow the notion of a compromise between activists and organisations as a key outcome of excellent communication. New activists and social movements tend to lack economic resources. By drawing on Bourdieu's notion of symbolic power, this study investigates alternative sources of capital. The following chapter provides a summary of his key ideas pertinent to this thesis.

Chapter 4

Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

This chapter discusses the ideas of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, notably his understanding of activism in society. Although he is one of the most quoted sociologists in the world (Santoro, 2011; Truong & Weill, 2012), his work has been largely ignored in public relations scholarship. Notable exceptions are the works by Ihlen (2005; 2007; 2009) and Edwards (2007, 2009). This is despite his focus on power, relationships and the role of activists in modern democracies, all of which are central themes in public relations practice and research. Based on Bourdieu's Theory of Practice, the discipline's dominant, industry serving, functionalist paradigm positions public relations' role in society as to perpetuate social inequalities. However, drawing on his ideas leads us to question if public relations skills could be utilised equally to challenge existing power imbalances in society, either in support or on behalf of those groups and individuals whose voices have been drowned out by traditional public relations efforts. In this chapter, I note that Bourdieu was an accomplished scholar, who was also an activist. It is this combination of personal experience with academic ideas that lends weight to his scholarly work through which he urged the scholarly community to utilise their skills, knowledge and research in order to challenge inequalities in society. The theories and ideas discussed in this chapter have informed the design of this study and provide the basis for the data analysis and theory development later in this thesis.

As introduced in the previous chapter, the notion of power is a key theme in research into activist communication. Researchers have shown that activists strive to challenge the status quo in competition with corporate entities and government departments that are typically considerably better resourced. Public relations scholars have suggested a number of power equalisers that may aid activists in their 'quest' to ensure their voice is being heard; most notably by recommending the use of traditional media (e.g. García, 2011; L. A. Grunig, 1992a) and new technologies (e.g. Bray, 1998; Bunting & Lipski, 2001; Coombs, 1998; Heath, 1998; Jaques, 2006; Mazzini, 2004). However, such recommendations are rarely based on research that includes the activist perspective. The literature has therefore concentrated on power disparities in relation to economic wealth, suggesting that activists lack economic capital as well as, to a lesser extent, human resources

(Dozier & Lauzen, 2000) and specialist skills (e.g. Stein, 2009). This disadvantage is apparent in this case study of West Australia's anti-nuclear activists. The WA ANM has traditionally been characterised by access to only very limited funds, minimal or no paid staff, the absence of specialised public relations training, and no fixed address for planning meetings and associated activities. Their apparent shortage of resources is particularly accentuated in comparison to the corporate entities whose license to operate they challenge. The background and literature review chapters suggest that contrary to suggestions in PR activism literature, traditional Australian media channels may have provided only limited support for and coverage of activist causes. Indeed, the media may have assisted in increasing existing power inequalities. Placed in a disadvantaged position and marginalised by the dominant forces in WA society, how are activists able to contest existing economic power inequalities and gain sufficient share of voice to successfully challenge the status quo?

The critical PR scholar Holtzhausen (2007) concludes that despite its prominent role in activism, power remains under-theorised in public relations literature. This 'gap' has gradually been addressed over the past years (e.g. Dutta, 2009; Dutta & Pal, 2010; Edwards, 2011; Edwards & Hodges, 2011; Weaver, 2001; Weaver, Motion, & Roper, 2006)¹². Furthermore, scholarly and practitioner literature in particular have failed to consider non-traditional communicators, such as activists, and non-commercial interests. This study thus draws on related fields and theories to further build the discipline's understanding of activist communication. The work of Pierre Bourdieu, an influential 20th century French philosopher, anthropologist and social scientist, has been identified as providing a useful framework for analysing and understanding contemporary activist communication within the context of this study. Bourdieu's (1977b) Theory of Practice, and ideas concerning symbolic capital offer insights into the complexities of power relationships, social change and the different types of resources (or in the words of Bourdieu: capital) that may aid understanding of how activists seek to position themselves in what Bourdieu would refer to as the arena of "political power games" (Bourdieu, 1998a).

¹² The online journal PRism also published a special issue on power in 2012, titled "Exploring power and public relations" (Volume 9, issue 2), <http://www.prismjournal.org/power.html>

The central role of power

The notion of power is central to Bourdieu's work. In publications such as *Acts of Resistance* (Bourdieu, 1998a), *The Weight of the World* (Bourdieu & Accardo, 1999) and *Political Interventions: Social Science and Political Action* (Bourdieu, Poupeau, & Discepolo, 2008), he repeatedly highlights power struggles between the resource-rich and underrepresented members of society. Bourdieu defines society as a social space that is marked by a constant struggle for influence, in which actors battle against each other in an effort to secure resources in order to further their own interest (Bourdieu, 1991; Bourdieu & Accardo, 1999; Grenfell, 2008; Honneth, Kocyba, & Schwibs, 1986). His public actions during the later stages of his career were characterised by his use of colourful language and analogies with battle fields and "power games" (Bourdieu, et al., 2008), thereby drawing attention to what he considered was intrinsic to the activist core—that is, conflict and the absence of a zone of compromise, as so frequently referred to in PR activism literature as best or excellent practice (e.g. J. E. Grunig & Grunig, 1997).

Recognising the multitude of perspectives and motives in any given society, Bourdieu called on the scholarly community to "relinquish the single, central, dominant, in a word, quasi-divine, point of view that is all too easily adopted by observers", instead encouraging his peers to "correspond to the multiplicity of coexisting, and sometimes directly competing, points of view" (Bourdieu & Accardo, 1993, p. 3; engl. translation published in 1999). This is something PR scholarship and particularly research into activism has to date largely neglected, due to the disciplines' predominantly corporation-centric research agenda. Most notably, Bourdieu does not solely theorise about the unequal distribution of power in society. Instead, he extends the idea of capital to all forms of power, "whether they be material, cultural, social or symbolic" (Swartz, 1997, p. 73). He therefore provides a useful framework that considers alternative forms of resources beyond the focus on economic wealth. These ideas have informed this study into how ordinary citizens seek to challenge the existing distribution of power in a given social context.

Whilst Bourdieu's theories about capital and power have been embraced within the related discipline of social movement research (e.g. Crossley, 2002; Diani, 1997; Haluza-DeLay, 2008; V. Taylor & Whittier, 1995), they have to date been largely ignored within public relations scholarship. This is surprising, considering the widespread recognition of the central role of power in public relations scholarship. However, it further emphasises the nascent development of public relations as a

critical scholarly discipline in its own right. Over the past years a number of exceptions have emerged, most notably the work of Scandinavian scholar Ihlen (2004; 2005; 2007; 2009) and the UK-based Edwards (2006, 2007, 2009). Ihlen has focused predominantly on Bourdieu's concept of social capital (2004; 2005), in particular language as a form of symbolic power (Ihlen, 2009) and Bourdieu's notion of 'field' (2007) within the professional public relations context. He concludes that PR can assist organisations in their struggle to position themselves in a certain field of practice (Ihlen, 2007). Similarly, Edwards applies Bourdieu's ideas about capital and symbolic power within a PR practitioner context. In her ethnographic case study of a UK-based corporate affairs team, she proposed two models that illustrate how the in-house PR team utilised symbolic power to legitimise its own role internally (Edwards, 2009). Despite this recent but limited interest in Bourdieu's work amongst PR scholars, to date there is an apparent lack of research into how capital as defined by Bourdieu is utilised by other groups in society, such as activists, to overcome economic power inequalities. This study is significant because it is positioned within the field of public relations and focuses on how activists draw on different forms of capital, besides the economic, to develop a voice in public debate.

Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

At the centre of Bourdieu's sociological work is what he refers to as a Theory of Practice, which is grounded in everyday actions by ordinary people (Bourdieu, 1977a). This practice stands in direct contrast to the analysis of social phenomena from the relative safety and distance of the researcher's office, or the view from the "ivory towers" to which Bourdieu (1998a; 1999) argued many scholars have been confined.

Without a doubt, the soundness of Bourdieu's scholarly ideas is due not only to his research and considerable experience as an academic thinker, but also to the complementarity of his personal life as an activist. Throughout both his academic career and private life, Bourdieu was an outspoken advocate for social justice. Within the intellectual community he was perceived as a rebel and a provocateur, who revelled in controversy and intellectual debate (Grenfell, 2004; Reed-Danahay, 2005). I argue that he was an activist, both at heart and in his professional life, where he developed his research skills and scholarly standing in order to highlight what he perceived to be inequalities in modern (French) society, with the aim of provoking a reaction and encouraging discussion (e.g. Bourdieu, 1998a, 1998b;

Bourdieu & Accardo, 1993, 1999). He dedicated his work and professional skills to individuals and groups whose viewpoints sought to promote social, political and economic change, but whose voices had traditionally been drowned out in the public spheres of modern Western societies. He committed himself to highlighting social differences and the unequal distribution of power and wealth (e.g. Bourdieu, 1977c, 1989, 1991, 1998b, 2001a; Bourdieu, Karabel, & Halsey, 1977), whether in the context of worker's rights (Bourdieu, 1998a), social benefits, globalisation, immigration or equal rights for homosexual couples.

Bourdieu did so first via the choice of his research projects and chosen methodologies, and later by actively participating in acts of civil disobedience and aligning himself with various movements¹³. For example, Bourdieu disregarded existing discipline knowledge (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002). Furthermore, he considered both empirical and theoretical methodologies inseparable (Webb, et al., 2002) and advocated contextualising empirical research through the use of rigorous 'self reflective' techniques (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) or 'participant objectivation', "in order to balance subjectivity and objectivity in research" (Reed-Danahay, 2005, p. 3). I discuss how I have applied these ideas to this study's methodological design in in Chapter 5 (Methodology). In his effort to "bridge the apparent divide between "academic theories" and everyday practices" (Webb, et al., 2002, p. 45), Bourdieu was prepared to borrow from what Swartz (1997) refers to as "theoretical enemies" (p. 5); that is, a range of established theories, including positivism, empiricism, structuralism, existentialism, phenomenology, economism, Marxism, methodological individualism and grand theory. He dismissed large chunks in the process, while holding onto those elements he identified as useful in his quest to develop a theory grounded in everyday life (Swartz, 1997).

Bourdieu insisted that scholarly research should be relevant to the lived experience of ordinary people (Bourdieu, 1998a). His ideas are therefore particularly suited to the analysis of activist communication and grassroots movements from the perspective of those who participate in such activities, such as activists. The implications of Bourdieu's Theory of Practice inspired both the methodology and theoretical framework for this study, as discussed in more detail in the following chapter. Firstly, however, the following section will provide an overview of

¹³ For example, Bourdieu had a strong involvement with various European unions in the 1990s, speaking to members of the German Gewerkschaftsbund (on 7th June 1997, see Bourdieu, 1998a, p. 60), addressing the Greek trade union confederation (GSEE) in Athens (in October 1996, see Bourdieu, 1998a, p. 29) and urging crowds at the Gare de Lyon, Paris, during the strikes of December 1995, not to accept the removal of social entitlements under the banner of globalisation (Bourdieu, 1998a, p. 24).

Bourdieu's key scholarly ideas that are pertinent to this study, with a focus on different types of capital and his notion of symbolic violence.

Habitus

Bourdieu perceived power as culturally and symbolically created. This occurs predominantly through what he labelled *habitus*. Although this study is not drawing extensively on Bourdieu's notion of habitus, I will provide a brief definition, as this is a central and one of the most cited concepts of his sociological approach (but according to Maton (2008) also one of his most misunderstood, misused and contested ideas).

Habitus is a set of socially learned dispositions and ways of acting that are developed and inculcated over time as a result of everyday experiences (Bourdieu, 1993). Operating on an unconscious level and often taken for granted, these determine the way in which we make sense of our social environment and our own role and position within it (Bourdieu, 1990). Prepositioning people to act in a certain way (Bourdieu, 1991), habitus essentially creates strategies for social actors on how to relate to the social world (Ihlen, 2009); that is, how to think, feel, speak, dress and act (Wolfreys, 2000). Often referred to in everyday life as 'common sense', habitus is shaped by our gender, class, age, nationality, ethnicity, education, political environment etc., which in turn pre-determine how we interpret and respond to the world around us. Bourdieu (1977b) argues that the core values of the dominant culture thereby become embodied by being placed "beyond the grasp of consciousness" (p. 93). However, although durable, habitus is not fixed or permanent; nor did Bourdieu suggest it acts like some form of enforced pre-programming. Instead, he explains the concept as regular reaction without conformity to the rule (Bourdieu, 1991). Individuals develop and are guided by their habitus from early childhood onwards (Davis & Seymour, 2010). Nevertheless, influenced by current circumstances and social context, as social actors we are constantly subjected to new experiences that may either reinforce or modify the original structure (Maton, 2008). I argue that being aware of its non-permanent nature, activists set out to challenge and influence the habitus in a given societal context, and thus challenge what is perceived as acceptable and what is not.

Fields (“Champs”)

Bourdieu shared Weber's view that society should not be analysed simply in terms of economic classes and ideologies (Swartz, 1997). Instead, much of his work analyses the impact of education (e.g. Bourdieu, Halsey, Lauder, & Brown, 1997; Bourdieu, et al., 1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) and culture (e.g. Bourdieu, 1958, 1987, 1996, 2004). He therefore developed the concept of ‘field’, a structured social space with its own rules, schemes of domination and legitimate opinions. If the habitus is a mental structure or a set of internal schemes through which people perceive and make sense of the social world around them, then the concept of field is the objective complement to it. The following paragraphs provide an overview of this construct.

The concept of field is a key spatial metaphor in Bourdieu's sociology (Swartz, 1997). According to Bourdieu, society is made up of many different fields (or “champs” in French), such as (higher) education, politics, science, journalism, academia, law, or business. Each field is characterised by a limited amount of capital or power, which is unevenly shared between the different actors or players (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Ihlen, 2009). Hence, fields – and ultimately society – are characterised by constant conflict and competition, as individual actors seek to maintain or increase their relative share of symbolic and material resources, which will allow them to position themselves and ultimately further their own interests (Bourdieu, 1991). According to Bourdieu, language and social relations are intrinsically linked. Relations of communication within a field are also relations of symbolic power in which the power relations between speakers or their respective groups are actualised. Hence, Bourdieu emphasises the relationship between discourse and social positions within a given community of practice. Organisations, individuals and groups may be seen as located within one or several fields, in each of which they compete to position themselves strategically within the social order (Ihlen, 2009). Hence, they may experience and perceive power differently depending on which field they are in at a given moment.

Bourdieu argues that although society is made up of several fields, these are essentially homologous and subsumed under the overarching field of power (Bourdieu, 1990; Edwards, 2009). Hence, struggles in one field have homologous effects (although never direct ones) in other fields (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Swartz, 1997). More importantly, those who hold a privileged position in the field of power, tend to occupy a privileged position in other fields, such as for example

politics, or the media. Bourdieu used the field of power concept in two overlapping ways: firstly, and most frequently, as a type of 'meta field'; and secondly, to refer to what others may label the elite, dominant or ruling class (Swartz, 1997). By using the term 'field', Bourdieu emphasises the relational, non-static nature of the construct, rather than limiting it to a pre-designated, specific population (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Swartz, 1997). For example, an environmental grassroots group would be located in a number of different fields, e.g. environment (or 'green'), politics, mining, and activism, in each of which it would compete to position itself strategically by securing a greater relative share of capital. Whilst its overall share of capital and symbolic power may be relatively substantial within the environment or activism field, its share would be considerably smaller than that of an international mining conglomerate in the field of politics, particularly if the latter is currently dominated by a conservative government and focus on the continuation of the West Australian resources boom. Whereas the activist group may be recognised as a credible and well-researched opinion leader amongst peers or in the environmental context, it might risk being ostracised when competing against other actors with greater capital and existing power. However, rather than seek to increase its own share of capital, the grassroots group may alternatively seek to challenge or alter mining corporations' share of capital instead.

Capital

In the 21st century, the power of Western societies is frequently associated with economic resources. However, Bourdieu extended the idea of capital to all forms of power, whether they be material, cultural, social, or symbolic (Bourdieu, 1986; Swartz, 1997). He identified four generic types of capital which ultimately determine status and power in a given field, and consequently society (Bourdieu, 1997). These are economic capital (e.g. money, shares and property), cultural capital (cultural goods and services including educational credentials), social capital (acquaintances and networks) and symbolic capital (legitimation) (Bourdieu, 1986; Swartz, 1997), each of which is covered in more detail in the following sections.

Economic capital

Bourdieu may have seen economic capital as largely self-explanatory, as he rarely expanded on his ideas about economic resources beyond emphasising that these

refer to those means that can be immediately and directly converted into money or property rights (Bourdieu, 1997). However, he acknowledged that despite identifying three more types of capital, the economic field “continues to carry the most weight” (Swartz, 1997, p. 80). Furthermore, he argued that although other forms of capital are not entirely reducible to economic capital, “economic capital is at their root” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 252). This is apparent in the conceptualisation of modern public relations, which in society is understood and intrinsically linked to the existence of economic capital, i.e. an organisation’s financial means, which enable it to employ professional public relations advice and counsel. This may be either in the form of in-house PR positions and departments, or the contracting of communication consultants. The existing share of economic capital will thus determine how an organisation, or its agents, may positively influence their capital in other fields, with the aid of tactical and strategic PR initiatives.

Cultural capital

The second generic capital category identified by Bourdieu is “cultural capital”, which is broadly defined as educational and cultural background, qualifications and knowledge (Bourdieu, 1991, 1997); or in Swartz’s words, “educational credentials” (1997, p. 74). Bourdieu further differentiated between three different forms of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Firstly, in an “embodied” state, cultural capital consists of both consciously acquired and passively inherited knowledge and expertise. Although parents can, for example, invest economic capital in their children’s education, embodied cultural capital itself is not instantly transferable, like a gift, but instead must be acquired over time. Secondly, in its “objectified” status, cultural capital is turned into physical objects, such as paintings, books or even an entire library. These cultural goods can be directly transferred into economic capital or utilised for the purpose of symbolically conveying capital and power. Finally, “institutionalised” cultural capital consists of institutional recognition, most commonly in the form of academic credentials and/or qualifications, such as a university degree. In summary, cultural capital may be visible in the way a person presents him or herself, how he or she speaks, and the relevant subject knowledge he or she may possess. This in turn can aid actors in gaining access to economic resources, for example funding, loans or sponsorship (Portes, 2000). Both Ihlen’s and Edwards’ studies focus on PR-specific cultural capital as a source of power. Although activists may lack public relations knowledge and expertise, their field

specific expertise (e.g. how to organise a mass demonstration, familiarity with political processes or understanding of mining processes) may be defined as cultural capital specific to activism and hence may be more important than PR expertise within this particular context. For example, anti-nuclear activists' knowledge of how uranium is extracted, the associated water requirements and potential environmental impacts, contrasted with familiarity of economic and employment statistics, positively impacts on their recognition and credibility. Objectified capital, such as donations of artefacts, can be transferred into economic capital at auctions and fundraisers. Finally, academic credentials, such as a degree in international relations or environmental sciences, will further impact on individuals' – and hence the activist group's – subject specific knowledge, resulting in their acknowledgement as knowledgeable, trustworthy sources of information.

Social capital

Bourdieu recognised the importance of contacts and networks when challenging existing power relationships and seeking a greater share of public voice. He defined these as “social capital”; that is, “those actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of...relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition...which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital” (Bourdieu 1997, p. 51). Social capital thus represents the sum of the resources, tangible or virtual, that an individual agent or activist group can effectively mobilise (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). These include the volume of the capital (economic, cultural and/or symbolic) possessed by each of those to whom they are connected, either via mutual acquaintance, recognition, or in a more institutionalised relationship. Therefore, it is not the actual size of the network that is solely important in the quest to challenge power relationships, but rather the quality of those included in its ‘nodes’. In the context of an environmental activist group this might signify that the actual group's (economic) capital is limited. However, its contacts, for example, with senior politicians, corporate advisors and opinion leaders, as well as the size of its membership and affiliates, along with these individuals' own capital, will impact on the positioning and power of the group in the field(s) it is operating in. Bourdieu thereby recognised the importance of contacts and networks in gaining power and share of public voice. The importance of social capital as a potential power source for WA ANM activists is examined in more detail later in this study. Ihlen (2009) emphasised that certain types of capital may be held

in higher regard in some fields, than in others. For example, cultural capital may be considered as crucial in the field of education, whilst social capital is particularly emphasised within the field of public relations or lobbying.

The analysis of power relationships from a purely economic perspective ignores a key defining factor of public relations: the importance of networks, contacts and relationships (Bruning & Ralston, 2000; Hung, 2005; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). However, despite the emphasis on networking in PR education and practice, this area remains largely under-investigated within PR scholarship. In contrast to this, the analysis of inter-organisational and political networks represents a major research stream amongst social movement theorists (e.g. Diani, 2002; B. A. Miller, 2000).

Symbolic capital

In its fourth form, “symbolic capital” is used somewhat more ambiguously throughout Bourdieu’s work (Davis & Seymour, 2010). In some cases, it represents an aggregate reflection of other capital forms possessed by powerful institutions and actors (meta-capital) (Bourdieu, 1986), resulting in a greater value than its material attributes suggest (Bourdieu, 1991; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Elsewhere it becomes something to be accumulated as a capital form in its own right by individuals and organisations, among their peers and within a field as well as beyond it (Bourdieu, 1998c). Translating into prestige, honour, legitimacy or a ‘glowing reputation’ (Webb, et al., 2002), symbolic capital as a separate form of power is limited in itself, and relies on other actors to recognise or believe that someone possesses these qualities (Webb, et al., 2002). Bourdieu therefore describes symbolic power as “misrecognised” capital (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 118; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 119). Like money or status it legitimises differences in social class and social importance. However, it is “misrecognised” as it is perceived as a person’s natural or inherent quality, rather than something that has to be accumulated over time. Hence, symbolic capital represents the taken-for-granted assumptions in the constitution and maintenance of power relations (Swartz, 1997), and acts as a way of legitimising social rankings and hierarchies (Bourdieu, 1977b). Bourdieu (1991) described symbolic capital as “almost magical power which enables one to obtain the equivalent of what is obtained through force (whether physical or economic)” (p. 170). What makes symbolic power so effective is that dominated individuals are not passive recipients. Instead, they themselves

believe in the legitimacy of the power and the rights of those who wield it, and hence accept and reinforce their own, marginalised roles.

In his analysis of the political field, Bourdieu concludes that “political capital is a form of symbolic capital, founded on credence or belief or recognition” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 192). As individuals and political parties continuously struggle over social, ideological and political positions, the emerging ‘victors’ get to “present their interests and ideas to the wider citizenry outside the field” (Davis & Seymour, 2010, p. 742).

Personally interested in movements and social change, Bourdieu used his concepts to explain power imbalances. In *Acts of Resistance* (1998a) he refers to the fact that progressive movements underestimate the importance of the symbolic dimension, as one of their key weaknesses, because this leads to their failure to forge “appropriate weapons to fight on this front” (p. 53). In his words, social movements are “several symbolic revolutions behind their opponents” (p. 53) that are able to draw on the help of media and public relations consultants to reinforce their dominant positions.¹⁴

Activists seek to challenge the status quo, the represented and taken-for-granted assumptions in a given society. They thereby intuitively question the distribution of symbolic capital and the “almost magical” power it bestowed on their holders. An environmental activist group, for example, might set out to challenge the power and influence that multi-national resources companies wield during the approval process for a new oil and gas project, in particular if their claim is perceived as more legitimate than environmental concerns and/or Indigenous land right issues. However, activists’ success will ultimately depend on their own share of symbolic power—their reputation and legitimacy—as perceived by the community and decision makers.

Symbolic violence

To possess symbolic power is to have the symbolic capital that entitles the owner to create discourses that generate consensus about reality, whilst simultaneously misrepresenting the real interests that underlie that reality, so that those who are subjects remain unaware of the actual drivers and motivations (Edwards, 2009).

¹⁴ Note: this is one of the very limited direct references to public relations in Bourdieu’s work

The exercising of symbolic power thus leads to what Bourdieu coined “symbolic violence” (or symbolic domination (Bourdieu, 1991)), by concealing the power relations that enable powerful actors to impose meanings as legitimate (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Critics of corporate public relations functions (Stauber & Rampton, 1995), for example, argue that this is the role and intention of modern public relations, i.e. the representation of the employing organisation’s or client’s interests as fair, legitimate and in the interest of society, whilst simultaneously concealing underlying interests, such as economic interests and power advantages. As the name suggests, in this context violence is exercised upon individuals in a symbolic rather than a physical way. This may take the form of people being denied resources, treated as inferior, or being limited in terms of aspirations (Webb, et al., 2002). However, most importantly, it requires the complicity of the dominated, who perceive their domination as right, natural and legitimate. Prevalent examples can be found in gender or race relations, where an individual may be denied access to services or career opportunities based on their sex or ethnic background. Reinforced in daily life, these socially created classifications become normalised and legitimise themselves via the construction of a seemingly natural ground (Bourdieu, 2001b). Bourdieu’s work in this area was driven by his experience as a young teacher in Algeria, which initiated his interest in “how individuals adapt to forms of domination, becoming acquiescent, if voluntary, participants in their own subjugation” (Wolfreys, 2002, p. 100).

At first sight, this concept resembles Gramsci’s (Gramsci, 1971) notion of hegemony, in that both refer to means of maintaining social inequalities in the interests of the dominant classes or key power-holders. Both describe phenomena that do not force people against their conscious will or better judgement, nor do they use physical force. However, hegemony describes a situation whereby consent is actively sought for those ways of making sense of the world which align with the interests and justify the domination of the ruling class or bourgeoisie, i.e. it is overt and explicit and requires the conscious acceptance of domination by social actors. In contrast, symbolic violence is based on misrecognition. Whereby Gramsci’s concept refers to civil society, Bourdieu conceptualised symbolic violence on the basis of a particular field of power, or habitus.

According to Bourdieu, activists inhabit a crucial role in modern societies, as “there is no genuine democracy without genuine critical powers” (Bourdieu, 1998a, p. 8). Although movements may be under-resourced and weakened (primarily due to underestimating their own power and capabilities), he believed in the significance of

their mere existence, as it “annoys people just like that” (Bourdieu, 1998a, p. 56). In this context an activist’s role could be interpreted as raising awareness of symbolic violence amongst those who have traditionally accepted and complied with their personal suppression by other elements of society. Based on Bourdieu’s ideas, a person’s role in society is not to convince the community of their subjugation, but to ask questions, challenge norms and encourage others to do the same.

Although Bourdieu remained centrally concerned with power and domination throughout his working life, Swartz (1997) emphasised that he did not link the concept of capital to a theory of ‘exploitation’ in a sense of extracting surplus value or wealth accumulation as it would be in a Marxian context. Instead, Bourdieu was driven foremost by an interest in understanding how individuals and groups accumulate and convert “various kinds of capital in order to maintain or enhance their positions in the social order” (p. 75).

Chapter summary

Despite Bourdieu’s focus on power relationships, which are at the core of professional public relations and in particular activist public relations, his work to date has been largely ignored in PR scholarship. Bourdieu proposed an alternative role for academia, urging his intellectual peers to provide social agents with the tools to challenge the status quo, rather than reinforce existing power inequalities. This study aims to do exactly that by building on the growing critical body of knowledge in public relations, with the aid of Bourdieu’s *Theory of Practice* and in particular, his ideas about capital and power.

Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and field, and capital and symbolic violence in particular, provide a useful framework for examining power relationships within the context of the West Australian anti-nuclear movement, by extending the understanding of capital beyond the conventional focus on financial resources. The concept of symbolic violence in particular emphasises the importance of the study context and the complicity of the West Australian community in defining norms and expectations, and hence, the State’s status quo, which the WA ANM has set out to challenge.

Bourdieu’s *Theory of Practice* poses a number of important questions for the field of public relations by extending the understanding of capital beyond the narrow confines of economic capital. As an academic discipline, public relations has been

criticised for its industry focus and lack of critical, scholarly work, particularly in contrast to related fields, such as media and cultural studies. To date, PR scholars who are not of the critical school have largely focused on providing solutions to industry problems, rather than critically analysing the industry itself. This functionalist perspective on research has tended to serve and support the public relations industry by accepting PR's symbolic capital and power (expressed by funding made available for paid expertise and research projects, extensive networks, access to other power holders, etc.), rather than enabling the scholarly community to distance itself and contribute critically to the discipline's body of knowledge. Throughout his work, Bourdieu rarely referred explicitly to public relations. However, based on his *Theory of Practice*, the question arises if PR practitioners' primary role is to perpetuate social inequalities, or if their skills and knowledge may instead be utilised to challenge existing power imbalances on behalf or in support of those groups and individuals that have so far been largely ignored or dismissed as trouble-makers. With the emergence of critical PR scholarship about activism, an alternative perspective has surfaced, which focuses on the role public relations plays in society.

Bourdieu's *Theory of Practice* and emphasis on lived experience have informed both the data analysis as well as the methodological decisions of this study, as is discussed in more detail in the following chapter (Methodology).

Chapter 5

Methodology and ethical decisions

This chapter offers a rationale for the design of the study. It also discusses the approach and methods selected to enable an examination of how the WA Anti Nuclear Movement (WA ANM) ensures its voice is heard publicly during the (revival of the) WA mining boom, and following the reversal of the State's long-held uranium ban. Pierre Bourdieu's notion of 'reflexivity' underpins the discussion of the ethical challenges and decisions. This chapter also provides reflection on the limitations and benefits of the role of the participant observer. It concludes by suggesting that public relations as a discipline can be enriched by ethnographic research because it enables the researcher to gain insights into alternative voices and viewpoints, and thus challenges the conventional literature.

Philosophical stance

This study, including some of its methodological choices, has been informed by the French social scientist Pierre Bourdieu's *Theory of Practice* (Bourdieu, 1977a) and his ideas on power. Bourdieu recognised that "each theory offers important, if incomplete, insights into the social world" (p.5) and advocated for the inclusion of new perspectives in an existing field of research. However, what has most inspired the methodological design of this study is Bourdieu's strong advocacy for the use of rigorous 'self reflective' techniques. The notion of 'reflexivity' is at the heart of Bourdieu's work (Deer, 2008). It is a phenomenologically inspired inquiry of knowledge creation, executed via the continuous questioning of whether, how, and to what extent the research process allows the subject of knowledge (i.e. the researcher) to grasp the object of his or her study in its essence (Deer, 2008). Bourdieu's work is characterised by the inclusion of a wide range of information, irrespective of its format, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of and insight into a research dilemma. In his own words, his aim was to "bring to bear all the available knowledge relating to the different dimensions of the social order" (Bourdieu, 2005, p.1). I have followed this approach in my methodology. Bourdieu's work closely resembles a case study approach, which is the research approach that has been selected for this particular study.

My study is informed by the stance of 'interpretivism', which acknowledges "the existence of multiple realities and truths which are open to change" (Daymon &

Holloway, 2011, p.102). In this context, this means that I recognise the validity of both the corporate and the activist perspectives, as well as acknowledge that there are many other ways to interpret and understand the role of the WA ANM in society. Read through Bourdieu's *Theory of Practice* (Bourdieu, 1977a), the West Australian context for this study can be described as a 'field of struggle', in which actors compete to maintain or challenge the status quo, which in this context is the perception of and attitude towards uranium mining. The WA State government, mining companies and anti-uranium activists have their separate reasons for supporting or rejecting the current expansion of uranium exploration. During the period of data collection for this study, each of these groups tried to position their perspective as the most widely accepted and supported amongst the wider WA public and key decision makers. Effective communication clearly plays a crucial role in their efforts to either maintain or challenge the status quo (as described in more detail earlier in Chapter 2: Background).

The interpretive research strategy assumes that reality is socially constructed and thereby contrasts with positivism. Positivism is a single epistemology associated with a realist ontology, based on the idea that the social world is a mirror of the natural world and therefore is 'real' rather than constructed. It is characterised by the testing of hypotheses, derived from and based on existing knowledge and theory. The aim of a positivist research strategy is to test existing theories and contribute material for the development of laws (Bryman, 2008), such as how businesses operate, or what excellent public relations consists of. Proponents of positivism argue that scientific research is value free and objective, and their research strategy is based on the assumption that a single truth exists. Closely linked to quantitative data analysis, the positivist paradigm is popular within a conventional public relations research context (e.g. de Bussy, 2010; J. E. Grunig & Grunig, 1992; Moss & Green, 2001), particularly within PR activism research (e.g. J. E. Grunig, 1989; J. E. Grunig & Grunig, 1997; Reber & Kim, 2006; Seo, et al., 2009; E. Sommerfeldt, 2011; M. Taylor, et al., 2001). It has traditionally dominated research decisions made within the marketing (communications) discipline (Daymon & Holloway, 2011), within which I was professionally positioned at the time of writing this thesis.

Although I acknowledge the validity of the positivist perspective as one way to conduct research, the interpretivist approach offers a number of advantages to my study. Firstly, an interpretive epistemology recognises the individual and the setting under investigation as a "unique entity" (Daymon & Holloway, 2011, p. 102). This

enabled me to study activism through the eyes of WA ANM activists, each of whom interpret their behaviour, experience and role in society in a unique way. Secondly, interpretivists express an ontological belief in the existence of multiple realities and truths, which are open to change. This worldview suits the fluid nature of movements, such as the WA ANM, which are in a state of constant flux, as individuals change priorities, new groups emerge, and others may lay dormant for a period of time. The interpretivist epistemology allowed me to critically examine the complexity of the meanings held by activists about the nuclear issue and activist communication, as well as power relations and the fluidity of the network at a given point in time, whilst recognising that my findings were constructed via activists' interactions both with each other and me, the researcher. From an interpretivist perspective, activist relationships are constructed, multifaceted and complex, and for this reason it is inappropriate to seek universal truths or patterns in research.

Reassuringly, the value of qualitative research approaches and interpretivism have recently become increasingly recognised amongst PR scholars (e.g. Daymon & Hodges, 2009; Edwards, 2009; Everett & Johnston, 2012; L'Etang, 2011, 2012; Pieczka & Wood, 2013), particularly within an activism research context (e.g. Demetrious, 2008a; Reber, et al., 2010; Weaver, 2010).

Case study approach

The research takes a case study approach to investigating how the WA anti-nuclear movement challenges the status quo. A case study approach includes an in-depth investigation into a specific phenomenon in its natural context (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). As such, it is a broad methodological approach and not a method in itself. I like to use the analogy of a 'picnic basket', in that a case study allows me to select techniques from various research approaches, such as ethnography and grounded theory, in order to collect the data, such as interviews, document analysis and participant observation, and analyse it. Like any social movement, the WA anti-nuclear movement is a collection of a wide range of individuals and groups, from different backgrounds and with individual motivations. Movements tend to be 'fluid' and subject to constant change. Andrews and Edwards (2004) argue that the dynamics of less structured groups are best captured in a case study format, thereby enabling researchers to observe, follow and document these changes as they occur. The strength of the case study approach, particularly within the WA activist context, is that it allows me to incorporate a variety of data types, from a range of sources over a period of time, resulting in intimate knowledge of 'my case'.

This enables me to explore new paths and emerging themes as events unfold, by drawing on the data available in that particular context. Although this is primarily a qualitative study, I am nevertheless able to include quantitative data, if suitable and appropriate.

Case studies, popular within the PR activist research context (e.g. Demetrious, 2002, 2008a, 2013; Lester & Hutchins, 2009; Sison, 2013; Stokes & Rubin, 2010; Weaver, 2010, 2013), have predominantly relied on secondary data analysis (Anderson, 1992; Coombs, 1998; Hearit, 1999; Heath, 1998; Henderson, 2005; Weaver, 2010) and with some exceptions (e.g. Demetrious, 2008a, 2013; Weaver, 2010, 2013) are largely descriptive. Scholars have argued that the potential of case studies has not yet been fully exploited within the discipline of public relations (Daymon & Holloway, 2011), and that the concept has been poorly understood (Cutler, 2004). However, because of their historical use in sociology and anthropology, in-depth case studies have been included in social movement research. Miller's (2000) multiple case study into anti-nuclear activism in the Boston area, Harvie, et al.'s (2005) case study of opposition to the 2005 G8 Summit, and Dawson's (1996) insight into eco-nationalism in Eastern Europe are a small sample of the wide range of comprehensive case studies of social movements. As Snow and Tram (2002) state: "There is no question about the utility of the case study for grasping and monitoring social processes" (p.155).

However, the case study approach does have its limitations. First, case studies are frequently deemed non-scientific (Daymon & Holloway, 2011), which may be explained by the prevalence of descriptive cases and limited understanding of the concept within the public relations context, as short case studies are primarily used for teaching purposes. Furthermore, due to their focus on specific research settings, the 'generalisability' of case studies is limited (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Finally, case studies are predominantly associated with qualitative data collection, i.e. they involve observation, interaction, interviews and/ or content analysis of a particular case. This can lead to 'intersubjectivity', as most of the interpretations and research choices made rely on the skills and worldview of the individual researcher (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). However, the same applies to other qualitative methodological approaches, such as ethnography and grounded theory. As discussed in this chapter, I have put strategies in place to ensure the quality of the research findings.

For this study, I initially considered a multiple case study design. Many groups and organisations are involved in activism in Western Australia. I commenced this study

by interviewing activists that represented a range of groups and issues (see page 134). The anti-nuclear movement emerged as one of the most active movements at that time (2009), which motivated me to focus this study exclusively on the WA ANM. As illustrated in Chapter 2, the WA ANM itself was represented by a number of individuals, groups and organisations. The Fremantle Anti Nuclear Group (FANG), the Rockingham Anti Nuclear Group (RANG), the Conservation Council, the Wilderness Society, the Raging Grannies, Footprints for Peace, the Australian Greens, the West Australian Nuclear Free Alliance (WANFA) were just some of the groups that had a stake in the WA anti-nuclear movement. Whilst a comparative study between these groups could have been considered as an alternative study design, it would have been extremely difficult to execute, as most of these groups are limited in size and often depend on one or two individuals to keep them active. Additionally, a comparative study would have artificially separated activists based on their group affiliation, thereby ignoring that activists effortlessly move between these groups and often hold multiple memberships. Equally, anti-nuclear 'actions' and events were usually co-organised, making it difficult to identify responsible groups, rather than core activists. Hence, whilst a multiple case study approach would have allowed me to identify the distinctive features of individual activist groups, enabling me to explore similarities and contrasts between cases, it would also limit the quality and 'richness' of the insights gained into the WA anti-nuclear movement. This is because it would instead focus much of my energy on locating a representative sample of interviewees from each group and thus, within the period of study, result in a much more superficial data collection process. Furthermore, Creswell (2012) cautions that the depth of a single case reduces as the number of cases under investigation increases.

The aim of this study is to provide intimate knowledge of how this particular movement challenges the status quo, rather than how their communication efforts vary from that of other movements or even between sub-groups. I therefore dismissed the multiple case-study design and opted for a single case, as it enabled deeper understanding of activism and a holistic analysis of the WA anti-nuclear movement.

This is an exploratory case study (Daymon & Holloway, 2011), which means it provides me with sufficient flexibility to investigate emerging themes and further explore new insights gained during the course of this study. The data was collected over three phases, which are detailed over the following paragraphs.

Stage One: Formative research into activists in Western Australia

Between February and May 2009 I conducted interviews with 13 West Australian activists from a wide range of backgrounds, covering what Smith and Ferguson (2001) distinguished as issue and interest groups (see Literature Review, page 61). See page 124 for a discussion of interviewing and page 134 for the sample selected. The Curtin University Ethics Clearance ID for this stage is SOM2009003

The aim of this phase was to identify important topics, pertinent issues, and key people in order to clearly define the direction for the research project into activist communication during the following phases. The majority of the included interest campaigns were classic NIMBY (not in my backyard) (Demetrious, 2001) crusades. Although interviewees provided fascinating insights into the challenges and highlights of their activist work, the NIMBY factor presented two major disadvantages. Firstly, as the key focus is linked to an individual's quality of life, NIMBY activists strive for a fast resolution to their 'problem', which limits the length of their campaigns and hence opportunities for data collection. Secondly, in the case of my research, many of these 'struggles' were driven by two or less extremely passionate individuals, which would restrict the outcome either to a biographic case study, or require a cross-group comparison.

Instead, I was fascinated by the complex relationship between issue activists, as well as the multiple memberships they often hold. The study theme emerged almost naturally during the formative interviews as an area of major activist activity, despite the fact that I did not seek out an anti-uranium campaigner to being with. Due to pure serendipity I was invited at the end of an interview to speak to the highly experienced, but only recently appointed, WA Uranium Fee Advocate during her second day at the Conservation Council. Simultaneously, I discovered that many activists I had selected for the interviews were associated in some way with the anti-nuclear campaign (see shading on page 134). During my analysis of the data from Stage 1, I discovered that the WA anti-nuclear movement was one of the most active and visible groups in 2009. This prompted me to further explore and confirm this during second data collection phase.

Stage Two: Formative research inside the WA ANM

Not having been involved with the WA ANM prior to the commencement of this study, I perceived it as crucial to establish trust and to familiarise myself with my new environment. In order to confirm the suitability of the WA anti-nuclear

movement as a focus for this study, as well as to further familiarise myself with the subject matter and key activists, I spent a week as a participant observer in the movement's umbrella organisation's (ANAWA) campaign office, during September/October 2009 (Curtin University Ethics Clearance ID: SOM2009033) (see page 123 for further discussion). The 'office' was a small room with two desks, plus an open meeting area and bathroom/kitchen facilities shared with other groups (most notably Oxfam) located north of the Perth Central Business District. In hindsight, the timing of this second study proved advantageous, with three part-time members of staff and the chairperson being present at various times (see page 135 for list of interviewees). Within less than three months, the ANAWA staff was reduced from 1.2 full-time equivalent to 0.2 administrative support, due to chronic funding shortages. Data collected during this stage, most notably interviews with ANAWA staff, campaign material and personal reflective memos, confirmed the increased activity surrounding the BUMP campaign, as well as the dispersed nature of the anti-nuclear movement. Additionally, my presence allowed me to establish and strengthen contacts, gain first-hand insight into past campaigns and planning processes into future initiatives, as well as identify additional key activists for interviews during the next stage of this study.

As part of the Stage Two research, I continued attending functions, participated in public 'actions' (see pages 138-9 for overview) and followed other events via online news (particularly social media) channels. I followed anti-nuclear related issues via traditional and online media. Within less than a year, it emerged that the movement had undergone dramatic changes. A number of activists had moved on, in some cases forced to take on other jobs as funding ran out. Others decided to concentrate on different causes and campaigns, in some cases initiating a move interstate or even overseas. Involvement in formal education, changes in personal lives and travelling are just some of the reasons why the composition of the movement changed drastically. At the same time, new activists and key organisers joined. These changes are not unusual and reflect the fluid nature of movements, as I discuss in more detail in my findings chapters. However, the dynamic environment created the need for a third stage of data collection, during which I could conduct further interviews and immerse myself in additional participant observation. Whilst the initial two stages provided me with insightful material, I felt additional data was needed to further explore emerging themes and theoretical propositions.

Stage Three: In-depth study of the WA ANM

At the end of 2010, local activists identified Western Australia as the “frontline” for anti-nuclear activists from around Australia, as a result of increased local and international industry interest in uranium mining, and intensified community opposition to uranium mining in other Australian states and territories. Whilst this information is based on verbal accounts, collected during observations at events and public actions, it does indicate the commencement of a period of increased action, thereby confirming the value of the research setting for this study. This was further confirmed by the fact that during the first half of 2011, the state of Western Australia hosted three uranium conferences, including an international convention.

This final phase of data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews with key anti-nuclear activists, ongoing participant observation in meetings and public actions, as well as continued qualitative data analysis (Murdoch Ethics Approval ID: 2011/007). Study participants were recruited with the aid of purposive and snowball sampling. Already established contacts, such as the Conservation Council’s Uranium Free Advocates and Jo Vallentine, a prominent anti-nuclear activist and the Chairperson of the Anti Nuclear Alliance, provided this project with additional legitimacy by endorsing my presence. Additionally, both the Advocates and Jo Vallentine were able to recommend potential participants and made valuable introductions. A total of 22 interviews with 21 activists were conducted during this phase (see pages 135-6). The primary criterion for the sample selection was affiliation with one of the movement’s wide range of regional (e.g. Fremantle Anti Nuclear Group), or special interest groups (e.g. West Australian Anti Nuclear Alliance, Clown Army). Hence, the final sample represents a wide cross section in terms of age, ethnicity and gender.

As a participant observer, I attended a wide range of planning meetings and public actions, such as demonstrations, publicity stunts and information events (see pages 138-9 for full list), which enabled me to identify additional interviewees, as well as to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the anti-nuclear movement and its underlying dynamics. As a single case study this research is complex, as it has different elements to it. This is largely due to the fact that this is a longitudinal case, covering various stages of data collection over a 2.5-year period, during which the various groups within the WA ANM changed and developed. This long-term nature has enabled me to acquire an intimate knowledge of the case, track changes over time and follow the anti-nuclear movement and its BUMP campaign in its natural

environment in real time. Data collection and analysis have consequently been closely interwoven throughout the life cycle of this study. At the outset of this study I was hoping this would conform to what Yin (2003) describes as a revelatory case, allowing me to observe and analyse a phenomenon that has previously been largely inaccessible to scientific investigation, or has been largely unexplored. However, based on insights gained during the data collection, as well as the literature review, I believe that to some extent this is also a representative or typical case – or what Bryman (2008) refers to as an exemplifying case – in that it displays the characteristics of a typical social movement, hence allowing some transferability of propositions beyond this particular study. I identified no negative (Daymon & Holloway, 2011) or critical (Bryman, 2008) examples within my sample.

Daymon and Holloway (2011) emphasise the open-ended nature of case studies. By definition, case studies always remain incomplete due to future developments, both internally and externally. This is arguably particularly the case when studying social movements, which are subject to constant changes, in this case internal structural changes, shifts in public opinion, environmental impacts, to name only a few. However, for examination purposes this research project was required to be completed within a limited time frame. Hence, although this case is longitudinal, it has a clear beginning and a carefully determined end. Like any social context, this case study is bound by time and place. Daymon and Holloway (2011) emphasise that it is crucial to define these ‘boundaries’ from the beginning. The case study is bound by geographical location (i.e. Western Australia) and time (late 2008 to June 2011), represented by the initiation and running of the BUMP (Ban Uranium Mining Permanently) campaign. The WA ANM re-grouped in late 2008, in response to the State Government’s reversal of the long held uranium mining ban. This led to the introduction of the BUMP campaign in July 2009, as well as the identification of the anti-nuclear movement as one of the most prominent examples of activism in Western Australia and consequently a suitable research setting for my study into activist communication. Furthermore, this period was identified by activists as crucial in terms of undermining the uranium mining industry, slowing the progress for individual projects, raising awareness of potential risks to health and heritage amongst the wider public and thereby decreasing public support for the Liberal Party’s pro-uranium platform. I completed the data collection in June 2011, when the state election campaign began, denoting the finalisation of party’s positioning on various issues, including uranium mining.

This study does not claim to provide a discussion of the WA anti-nuclear movement in its totality. Instead, its focus is on providing a comprehensive insight into the movement during the execution of the BUMP campaign, with a particular focus on their activities between the announcement of the uranium mining ban reversal and the commencement of the following state election campaign.

Challenges of my case

There were a number of challenges in carrying out this research. First of all, the anti-nuclear movement is dispersed. Activists come from a range of backgrounds. Furthermore, due to limited job opportunities, many divide their time between professional work, study, private lives, social commitments, other causes close to their heart, and the anti-nuclear movement. The fluid nature of the movement and widespread reliance on 'part-time' activists made it difficult for me to identify crucial interviewees and it was thus challenging to keep up to date with changes. As a researcher I could only gain access to those activists that I was made aware of and who were prepared to share their insights. Throughout this study, many potential participants were reluctant to share their thoughts in a formal interview, as they felt they had nothing novel to add or claimed to lack in experience. However, I overcame this through informal conversations and note taking at events and meetings. Additionally, due to the underfunded nature of the movement and general lack of resources, arranging times for interviews proved to be extremely challenging. Full-time periods of observation or participant observation were impossible, due to the lack of structured activity and absence of a 'base' or regular meeting point for the movement. Nevertheless, the fact that I was able to immerse myself in the movement over a period of two and a half years, thereby gaining first-hand insight into the activist perspective and an understanding of what anti-nuclear activists actually do, makes this study unique in the context of public relations scholarship into activist communication. Furthermore, WA's isolation may represent an advantage in terms of setting the geographical boundaries for my case, however, this also raises the question of how representative my insights and transferable my findings will be for other Australian or even overseas movements. This is discussed further in my concluding chapter.

Data collection overview

This study is exploratory in nature, drawing on a range of data collection methods to provide insights into how WA anti-nuclear activists challenge the status quo. Exploratory research has been compared to the activities of a traveller or explorer, with the advantage of being flexible and adaptable to change (Adams & Schvaneveldt, 1991). I feel that the notion of 'travel' and 'discovery' complements the nature of this study, during which I embarked on a journey through largely uncharted territory; both in terms of gaining a better understanding of activists as communicators and particularly of activist communication within a(n) (West) Australian context. Klandermans and Staggenborg (2002) highlight the value of a multi-method approach, particularly within the social movement context, by warning that "restricting ourselves to a limited methodology would necessarily make us fall short of the theoretical synthesis needed" (p. xv).

The notion of triangulation, used to ensure authenticity and trustworthiness, consists of more than simply mixing data collection methods (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). It only takes place if the same phenomenon is examined in different ways and/or from different perspectives. In this case, I have decided on a combination of the ethnographic techniques of participant observation and interviews, supported by qualitative document analysis. Snow and Tram (2002) identify this type of triangulation, based on the use of multiple methods, as one of three key defining features of social movement case studies. By choosing to use ethnographic techniques, I am ensuring that I gain in-depth, emic insights into the WA anti-nuclear movement, resulting in a comprehensive case, based on what Geertz (1973) labelled 'thick description' of the movement's communication efforts. This use of multiple research methods and sources is another crucial factor in ensuring the quality, validity and reliability of this study.

The ethnographic element of this study is reflected in its focus on the lived experiences of participants and my aim to "see the world as they do" (p.146), i.e. through the WA anti-nuclear activist lens. Daymon and Holloway (2011) explain that whilst ethnography has gained increased acceptance within a marketing context (e.g. ethnography of consumption), its application is still very limited within public relations scholarship, although there has been some recent promotion of this approach (L'Etang, 2012; L'Etang, Hodges, & Pieczka, 2012). This limited level of engagement with ethnography (and qualitative research methods in general) by PR scholars arguably requires me to provide an even more thorough justification for my

choice of methodology. This study is based on a conventional descriptive ethnography, focusing on the portrayal of culture, the WA ANM and its various sub groups, with the aim to uncover patterns and typologies in the data. Throughout this process I have seen participants as collaborators, rather than passive respondents to my questions. As the study progressed, interactions with participants became increasingly informal and frequently spontaneous. For example, I may be commenting via email on a news article that I have read in relation to the movement, 'bump' into an activist who had been absent for the past few months at an action, congratulate another activist on her recent engagement, follow status updates of activist 'friends' on Facebook or often even comment on these myself, encouraging an exchange of ideas. As such, the lines between my multiple roles as researcher, interested and supportive follower of the movement, and participant are, arguably, increasingly blurred. On reflection, I do not believe that I ever managed to 'shed' my position as an outsider. My presence may have increasingly become accepted at events and functions, but essentially I remained at the margins of the movement. My study essentially relied on the insider knowledge of WA anti-nuclear activists. It was this 'tacit' knowledge that I aimed to elicit with the help of formal interviews and informal conversations at actions and gatherings.

Social movements are characterised by their fluid shape and heavy reliance on volunteers. This was particularly evident in the context of the WA ANM, which had a limited number of paid activists and continuously changed key organisers. The Anti Nuclear Alliance of WA (ANAWA) had a permanent office north of the capital city, which however remained largely unstaffed. Additionally, many anti-nuclear activists were involved in a range of other, frequently connected or affiliated causes, which resulted in varying levels of commitment and participation. There was no set 'base' or 'home' for the movement, and participation at 'actions' varied, with people arriving and leaving at various times. As a result of this, semi-structured interviews with activists (both key organisers and those at the fringes of the movement) were identified as a key data collection method.

I recognise that there may have been inconsistencies between what participants (or interviewees) said they did, and what they 'actually' did as part of their involvement in the anti-nuclear movement. This is not necessarily a result of their secretive nature, but rather a consequence of limited time for reflection. The social movement researcher Lichterman (1998) illustrates, based on his own extensive research experience, how many insights can easily be misinterpreted or crucial information overlooked if researchers are lacking periods of immersion in the culture

of activist groups under study. In order to limit this danger and furthermore allow triangulation of results, I chose participant observation at public 'actions' (i.e. gatherings, demonstrations, events) as an additional data collection method, supported by qualitative document analysis of activist documents (flyers, posters, websites, information brochures, stickers), industry publications (research reports, websites, information brochures) and media reports (on- and off-line, including comments in response to online news articles).

Although my aim was to understand the research phenomenon from the point of view of the people involved, i.e. through the lens of WA-based anti-nuclear activists, I nevertheless had to recognise broader social forces that may have impacted on the movement's communication efforts, by following and tracking industry, economic, political and other related developments. I kept field notes (observations, reflections and photos) throughout the various stages of this study, an approach which highlights this study's influence by Pierre Bourdieu's notion of reflexivity or reflective practice.

In the following section I discuss in depth my chosen data collection methods and explain the rationale for their use in this study.

Interviews: overview

With only a very limited number of paid positions in activist organisations, most activists have to secure an income, which quite often is earned in an entirely unrelated area. Despite often being excellent time managers, combining work, sometimes study, social and family commitments as well as activist activities, they are essentially time poor. At public actions, such as demonstrations and publicity stunts, there is usually not sufficient time for the researcher to engage in a deep, meaningful discussion. People rush in, they know their responsibility as part of a particular event, before they rush back to work, or on to other commitments. In my study, activists moved on a number of occasions from one action (e.g. the demonstration outside the BHP headquarters in the Perth CBD on 19th November 2009) to participate in another event (in this case a demonstration by a union, demanding a wage review outside Government House). Additionally, much of the existing anti-nuclear knowledge is historical, built on past, shared activist experience and expertise. Consequently, as someone who was relatively new to the movement and had only lived in Western Australia for four years before commencing this

study, I determined that interviews, which took place at venues outside events, would be the most appropriate way to gain insight into activist activities and seek answers and further clarification to those questions and phenomena that emerged throughout the course of this study.

According to the social movement scholars Blee and Taylor (2002), interviews are guided conversations and “one of the primary ways researchers actively involve their respondents in the construction of data about their lives” (p. 92). Interviews are a common tool in the field of social movement research (e.g. Allsop, Jones, & Baggott, 2004; Earl & Schussman, 2002; Fantasia, 1988; Morris, 1984; Staggenborg, 1994) and have been described as “particularly useful in research on loosely organized, short-lived, or thinly documented social movements” (Blee & Taylor, 2002, p.93).

With minor exceptions during the first stage of this study, all interviews were conducted face to face. Two exceptions had to be made in the form of phone interviews, as one participant was located in the State’s south and another had recently moved interstate, whilst nevertheless continuing her position as one of the key organisers for her group. The interviews provided me with an opportunity to further develop my existing knowledge, explore new areas and confirm or challenge my interpretations of observations. Essentially, they enabled me to qualify my outsider perspective and observations through activists’ insider knowledge, deeper insights and understanding. The semi-structured nature of the interviews provided me with the necessary flexibility to explore new avenues and probe more deeply when interesting topics emerged. Recognising activists’ resource limitations, I asked participants to suggest an interview location that suited them. Consequently, the majority of interviews took place in cafes around Perth. Despite the clear disadvantages of conducting an interview in a public venue (noise, interruptions, lack of privacy) it was important for me to create a relaxed, non-threatening environment for the interview process to ensure participants felt comfortable enough to share some of their knowledge and insights with me.

During the interview process I took extensive field notes, followed by written in-depth reflections on each encounter. Stage one and two interviews were not voice or video recorded. Undoubtedly, this had its disadvantages, as it put pressure on me to take down notes as quickly and accurately as possible, to ensure I did not miss any important details. This resulted in an incomplete interview ‘transcript’. Whilst writing, I was unable to establish eye contact and most importantly to listen

deeply. The decision not to use voice recordings was not taken lightly. However, in most cases I was asking complete strangers to provide me with insight into their activist activity. Because I took selective notes, participants were able to ask me to leave certain information out. It was not uncommon for a participant to tell me “Don’t write this down, but...” By the time I commenced my final round of interviews, I had had the chance to establish a level of trust within the WA ANM. Furthermore, individual activists had a chance to get to know me and become somewhat accustomed to my presence. I therefore felt confident to apply a more formalised, audio recorded approach, which allowed me to concentrate more on the participant and his or her body language, rather than purely their voice.

One risk associated with interviews is that they provide participants with time to reflect and craft thought through, polished and deliberate answers. Participants may like to present themselves in a certain light, choose not to include certain information or even decide to provide misleading statements (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). On the other hand, the time provided may not have been sufficient to think through why they did what they did, and how exactly they did it. Consequently, what they thought they did might be different to what they actually did when faced with the need for quick decision making during an action. A small number of activists further expanded on their answers in response to receiving the full transcript. One participant even requested an additional interview in order to expand on his ideas and observations. By following up emerging themes with other interviewees, I was able to confirm key ideas, as well as ensure data saturation. However, recognising the limitations of the interview collection method, I identified the need for prolonged periods of participant observations, to gain a first-hand insight into activist activities.

Participant observation: overview

It soon became obvious that in order to gain meaningful insight into the movement’s activists, I would have to shift the focus of my data collection techniques. Although the movement did not set out to be exclusive, its dispersed, fluid nature resulted in information being restricted to a core group. This made the recruitment of appropriate, potential interviewees impossible without the support of what Bryman (2008) refers to as internal ‘sponsors’. If I was to gain an understanding of activist communication from an emic perspective, I had to move my focus towards participant observation and become an insider within the WA ANM network, thereby

shifting my role from removed observer at public events to active participant in planning meetings and often spontaneous public 'actions'.

My positivist colleagues would argue that by changing my status from subject to object of this study I essentially 'tainted' my data, thereby devaluing my results due to limited objectivity. However, it is only on reflection, by sitting down to write this thesis, that I have become fully aware of how limited and distorted my understanding of the movements' efforts was before I became an active participant in its activities. As Tedlock (2005) states: "Culture is emergent in human interaction rather than located deep inside individual brains or hearts" (p. 470). Interviews alone would not have been able to capture the richness of the ANM WA's language and rituals, the diversity of their activities and the extent of its local, national and international networks. Much of the internal knowledge was absorbed or passed on during informal conversations.

The social movement researcher Lichterman (2002) argues that participant observation is "distinct from other [qualitative] methods because it produces the most direct evidence on action as the action unfolds in everyday life" (p.121). In the case of the anti-nuclear movement, participant observation enabled me to triangulate findings with other data collected and provided me with valuable information about additional activists, creative approaches to actions, the complex planning processes that were occurring in the background, challenges as well as a hands-on insight of a movement 'in action' as an event unfolded (e.g. the way activists communicated, reacted to opposition, tools and tactics used, etc.). Additionally, my involvement as participant observer helped me to build and strengthen relationships, as well as to give something back. Acknowledging that anti-nuclear activists are extremely limited in their resources, both financially and terms of time, my study had the potential to disadvantage activists by placing an additional strain on their means and capabilities. Consequently, I identified the need to compensate individuals and, most importantly, the movement as a whole, for the time they had provided me with. Whilst I was prepared to share my findings at the end of the study, I felt that this might not automatically be the best value I could provide the movement with, particularly in immediate terms. Consequently, I volunteered my help at various times. For example, I assisted in the office, helping with general administration and reviewing communication activities during my week with the ANAWA, and I participated in actions. Throughout the course of this study I joined a protest and distributed flyers outside the BHP head office in Perth. I helped

set up the BBQ for activists gathering outside the BHP AGM in the Convention Centre and dressed up in a white suit and joined the anti-nuclear float at the Fremantle carnival. Finally, I provided support in numbers at gatherings and demonstrations.

Participation in actions enabled me to gain a more comprehensive insight into and understanding of the movement, by observing activists 'in action', getting involved in conversations or simply being able to overhear others. Joining activists for lunch or for a drink after an action enabled me to engage in meaningful, insightful conversations in a less pressurised environment than a formal interview would enable. During these conversations I gained insight into intra- and inter-group politics, setbacks, personal motivation and past experiences, as well as emotional responses to latest events. Consequently, I gained sensitivity to the issues with which the movement was faced. I documented my thoughts and observations in reflective field notes, as well as using informal discussion to further inform my emerging theories.

Gold's (1958) classic typology identified four participant observer roles; however, I found that as researcher I was not strictly limited to one of these, but instead adopted different roles at different times. Whilst I set out as 'observer as participant', I increasingly felt myself moving into a 'participant as observer' role (e.g. dressing up, playing a role in the Mad Hatter's Tea Party and distributing flyers at the Fremantle Carnival). As I continued to subscribe to movement newsletters and followed activists' updates, reflections and commentary on social media, I found it gradually more difficult to exclusively focus on my professional role as researcher, particularly during periods of intense observations. I needed to strike a balance, in what Thome (1979) describes as problematic: "a dialectic between being an insider, a participant in the world one studies, and an outsider, observing and reporting on that world" (p. 73). Finding this balance is fundamental for the collection of rich data in social movement research (Blee & Taylor, 2002), avoiding what Bryman (2008) refers to as "going native" (p. 412), i.e. facing the risk of gradually acquiring the same worldview as participants.

On one hand, I was engaging in a conversation, keen to provide the other person with my full attention. However, my role as researcher required me to simultaneously store facts and quotes for my reflective memos, scan the environment for other noteworthy occurrences or insights, and take mental notes of body language. Whilst doing this, I had to be an engaging conversationalist, keeping

the conversation going and providing intelligent responses. At times I found it difficult to pay attention to what was being said, feeling myself drift away, absorbed in my mental notes. As Forsey (2004) observed during his fieldwork, "The ways in which ethnographers position themselves affect the stories they tell just as much as they affect the type of relationships formed in the field" (p66). The core of WA ANM organisers was very tight knit. To allow an element of surprise, many actions were planned in secrecy, with details only available to the inner circle, which often consisted of only two or three individuals. As a researcher, I did not perceive it to be in my interest to actively aim to gain access to this core, particularly as I could not guarantee continued involvement beyond this particular study.

As my involvement intensified, I got to know individual activists and consequently engaged in many conversations that became increasingly private. I started to care about people, became interested in their personal lives and on a number of occasions, felt myself slipping into a position where I was enjoying myself as a member of a dynamic, enthusiastic and caring community, as opposed to remaining the objective researcher who is neutrally observing events from the sidelines. As a participant, I became involved in administrative duties, distributing information flyers during demonstrations, contributing to planning meetings and dressing up as part of public actions. This tension between my role as an insider and my research commitment as outsider increased as the study progressed.

Angrosino (2005) argues that membership-orientated researchers are by definition intrusive, which does not have to be negative per se. However, I cannot deny that my presence impacted on the research setting. Essentially, I ceased being the subject, and instead became an object of my own study. Intensified personal involvement meant that I wanted to offer something in exchange for the time and access I had been provided with. As a lecturer in public relations, it is only natural for me to provide advice in regard to media relations, event planning and creative execution. I successfully applied for community funding on behalf of the WA ANM for the 2012 anti-nuclear float. Without undervaluing activists' expertise, my involvement in shaping the direction of WA ANM activities, however small my contributions may have been, raises concerns about how much I, as participant observer, influenced the actual outcome of my own study.

Bourdieu specifically emphasised the challenges involved in participant observation projects, due to the sometimes artificially close familiarisation between the

researcher and the 'foreign' social environment. In recognising the underlying tension as participant observer, a position where the researcher is forced to be both object and subject of the study, he emphasised the epistemological importance of what he coined 'participant objectivation' (Bourdieu, 2003). Bourdieu argued that this type of reflexive approach would enable researchers to both control and, most crucially, limit the influence of their own presence on the object of their research; for example, by avoiding the danger of unconscious projection of his or her own worldview onto the understanding of the social practices that are being studied (in this case, activist communication). In applying Bourdieu's ideas of reflexivity throughout this study, it is important to emphasise that he cautioned the scholarly community not to confuse the "device of reflexivity" with what he labelled "self-absorbed, narcissistic reflexivity", which he accused a number of his (postmodern anthropologist) peers of indulging in (Bourdieu, 2003, p. 281). I endeavoured to remain conscious of this distinction throughout my study.

Building and maintaining trust

A key objective throughout this study was to obtain and maintain access. This was particularly important in light of the many changes the movement continued to undergo. Changes within the movement resulted in a change in key activists and gatekeepers, which required me to recruit new 'sponsors' (Bryman, 2008) throughout this project. Due to resource restrictions, many events and functions were not particularly widely advertised, which required me to be on the correct mailing lists and/or rely on direct invitations from activists. Social media, and the opportunity to follow groups and individuals, emerged as a crucial tool, enabling me to gain a better understanding of the wide range of activities associated with the movement and its activists.

As this is a single case study, the danger of key gatekeepers becoming suspicious, or withdrawing access for other reasons, was a constant risk. The impact of this could have been devastating. Lofland (1977) experienced this in his classical study of the Doomsday Cult, when access to members was suddenly withdrawn, as it became obvious that the researcher was not intending to actually join the group. As such, I personally felt that it would be wise to offer my help and support, but to otherwise remain professional and not overly keen to penetrate the 'inner core'. As a relative newcomer, I risked being perceived as a 'spy', particularly as the university I am professionally associated with is recognised for its close alignment

with the mining and resources industry. Corporate infiltration of activist groups for intelligence-gathering purposes is not uncommon (Stokes & Rubin, 2010). For example, Burton and Hager (2000) provide an account of how the New Zealand government-owned enterprise Timberlands' involvement with a local environmental group, essentially undermined activists' efforts to protect old growth forest. Similarly, any doubt about the genuine nature of my research focus could have resulted in an immediate withdrawal of access by means of removal from the organisation's internal information networks, or in Van Maanen's (1988) words, "possible deportation" (p. 2). The perception of the researcher as a 'double agent' or 'spy' emerges regularly in participant observation (see e.g. Ceglowski, 2000; Forsey, 2004). The fear of being denied access and having my intentions publicly questioned was a constant companion throughout this study. It became very real when I received a phone call from one of the key organisers towards the end of the observation period, who with the best intentions wanted to make me aware that "questions had been asked about my role and motivation". Initially, I was disappointed. I had worked hard at developing a level of trust. However, I could also understand how suspicious my presence and questions may have appeared to newcomers. Since I was already nearing the end of my study, I decided to cease attending planning meetings, as I felt that my presence might compromise the effectiveness and quality of the research, or force activists to discuss sensitive information in an alternative setting.

My observations were captured via field notes and photographs (predominantly images of actions taken via mobile phone). As such, I was freezing the situation in time, by capturing a moment of activist activity. This was followed by extensive reflective notes and memos, which provided the basis for my coding, based on themes and emerging theories.

Written, visual and multi-media sources: overview

In the context of this study, written, visual and multi-media sources have been introduced to supplement insights gained during both the interview and participant observation process. These texts include activist generated material, such as websites, social media content, flyers, photos, information brochures and banners, as well as documents that have been generated by 'outsiders', such as media coverage, online commentary, corporate and government websites. Daymon and Holloway (2011) refer to this type of documentary sources as "artefacts of social

communication” (p. 277), which in this context have two key aims. Firstly, they provided additional insight into how both activists’, as well as ‘outsiders’, view the movements’ past and current actions. As such, they provided further opportunities for triangulation and to familiarise myself with the movement’s language. Secondly, qualitative document analysis enabled me to gain a comprehensive understanding of the wider, socio-economic context as well as the movement’s development over the past four decades. Some of these documents have been referenced and referred to throughout this thesis.

Sampling

I have used theoretical sampling to collect and analyse my data. Glaser and Strauss (1967) introduce this as alternative to probability sampling, which is common in quantitative research. Here the focus is not on obtaining accurate evidence on the distribution of people amongst different categories, but on discovering categories and their properties in the first place. As Charmaz (2000) emphasises, theoretical sampling is an ongoing process that is primarily concerned with the refinement of ideas and not the boosting of sample sizes, which according to Daymon and Holloway (2011) tend to be between 4-40 for qualitative studies. This study contains 30 formal and nine informal interviews with 36 activists and 47 incidences of participant observation. As is common in qualitative research, I applied a purposeful (or purposive) sampling strategy, in order to select individual interviewees and sites for participant observation. This allowed me to gain rich data and in-depth insights into the movement. This approach was supported by snowball sampling, which enabled me to draw on participants’ knowledge and expertise to identify further, potentially valuable, interviewees and sites.

Access

Gatekeepers, such as the ANAWA Chairperson, Jo Vallentine, and the Conservation Council’s WA Uranium Free Advocates, played an important role throughout this study. Endorsement by these individuals was crucial for access to research sites and other activists. Furthermore, as a researcher and essentially an outsider I did not automatically know who belonged to the movement, who would be a valuable key informant, and when and where I could observe them in action. As such I relied on insiders, key informants and sponsors to provide me with further direction and recommendations. The crucial role these gatekeepers play in my

research is emphasised in Klandermans and Staggenborg's (2002) *Methods of Social Movement Research*. Although the anti-nuclear movement appeared to be welcoming and inclusive, it is also tight knit. Official communication channels were frequently underutilised due to resource restrictions. It was not uncommon that a call for action was distributed with less than 24 hours' notice. This might have been to ensure a certain level of surprise, but in reality it was often due to resource restrictions. Throughout the first two (formative) stages of this study, I strove to recruit a number of key contacts, or sponsors. Support from these visible and respected activists provided me with access, and most importantly ensured that I would be on the distribution list for regular mailouts. Without personal contact details, I would not have been able to participate in a number of events, as official communication channels (e.g. the ANAWA email account) were only sporadically monitored by activists. However, it became quickly apparent that I could not afford to rely solely on one or two key contacts. As the movement changed shape, my contacts also changed positions or even lost their status as gatekeeper or key activist, which required me to continuously re-recruit.

My university affiliation may have had an impact on my access. Professionally, I am associated with a university that is known for its strong industry ties and specialisation in the mining and resources sector, which could potentially raise suspicions about my true intentions. However, my enrolment for doctoral research with a different institution, i.e. Murdoch University, arguably shifted the perceived research focus further to the left. Past, current and future Murdoch students were represented amongst anti-nuclear activists and affiliated groups, which is arguably not surprising, considering the public recognition of the university's active student culture and focus on sustainability.

Sampling: Interviews

Most participants were comfortable to be identified as part of this study. The activist community in Western Australia was relatively small and extremely tight knit. This applied in particular to anti-nuclear activists and affiliated causes. Activists were therefore well known amongst their peers. Key advocates, such as Jo Vallentine or Indigenous representatives, were frequently featured in the media and easily identifiable by the wider community. However, I experienced one unexpected case of reluctance to be identified by name, which was less linked to the activist's personal profile and standing, than to the organisation with which the individual was

affiliated. In order to avoid any damage or inconvenience that views expressed in this study might have had on the organisations with which the individuals were linked, I decided to use pseudonyms throughout this study and deliberately omitted job titles and responsibilities.¹⁵ I have stated the organisations that activists were affiliated with, as I believe this is crucial within the context of this study. By identifying the organisations, I can show the dynamic relationship between activist groups.

The main focus for the formative stage one of this study was to select a range of both issue and interest activists. These were primarily chosen based on publicity (mainly media coverage) their cause or organisation had recently received in Western Australia, as well as recommendations from their peers/previous interviewees. As mentioned earlier, the anti-nuclear activism theme emerged clearly during this phase of data collection. Interviewees are listed below with a reference to the organisation to which they originally belonged at the start of this study. The descriptors helped me to easily re-identify individuals and their activism background. Shading indicates a link to and interest in the anti-nuclear movement.

Name	Descriptor	Organisation	Date of interview
Ronald	The Green activist	Friends of Rock Art	6/03/2009
Kay	The 'born into' activist	Edmund Rice Institute for Social Justice	28/04/2009
Carl	The 'under the radar' activist	Mineral Policy Institute	3/06/2009
Eliza	The 'out there' activist	Conservation Council	28/04/2009
Peter	The career activist	World Wildlife Fund	11/03/2009
Pepe	The young high achiever	Oaktree Foundation	17/03/2009
Nadia	The radical activist	Conservation Council	28/04/2009
Josie	The animal lover	Stop Live Exports	29/04/2009
Pauline	The outspoken widow	Connolly Reference Group	29/04/2009
Janice	The passionate mum	Additive Alert	6/05/2009
Bruce	The concerned father	Save Bells Rapids	19/03/2009
Lola	The 'activism as professional development' campaigner	Fremantle Environmental Resource Network (FERN)	17/02/2009
Marty	<i>The remote crusader</i>	Global Warming Forest Group	15/02/2009

Shading denotes activist with anti-nuclear link
 Grey font denotes phone interview

Illustration 5.1: List of Phase One interviewees

Interviews during stage two of this study included all activists present at the ANAWA office during the period of participation observation:

¹⁵ The organisational maps in the study appendix are an exception. These are based on activists' real names, job titles and affiliations, as the use of pseudonyms would have facilitated the re-identification of in text quotes and references throughout this thesis.

Formative Study II: Week long participant observation at ANAWA offices (September-October 2009)

Name	Descriptor	Organisation	Date of interview
Sandra	The teacher	ANAWA, Greens, Oxfam	28/09/2009
Kay	The 'born into' activist	ANAWA	30/09/2009
Helen	The Chernobyl 'survivor'	ANAWA	28/09/2009
Joy	The lifelong peace activist	ANAWA	29/09/2009

Table 5.2: List of Phase Two interviewees

As mentioned earlier, major changes took place during the course of this study. Activists left or took a step back to concentrate on other causes. Others went travelling, took up work opportunities interstate or decided to concentrate on their education. At the same time, new people joined, returning from activities overseas, filling up paid vacancies or simply deciding to increase the level of their engagement. A yearly snapshot of the changing nature and dynamics of the movement is included in the appendix. Additionally, there were many other groups and initiatives at the fringes of the movement, which I only became gradually aware of. The interviews undertaken as part of stage three of this study reflect these changes. Participants were chosen based on their position, their involvement at various actions, and as a result of other activists' recommendations, and are listed based on the primary anti-nuclear groups and initiatives they were affiliated with at the time of interview.

Main Data Collection: interview series in 2011 (informal interviews highlighted in grey)

Name	Descriptor	Organisation	Date of interview
Alycia	The interstate campaigner	BUMP, CCWA	28/02/2011
Joy	The lifelong peace activist	ANAWA, PND	15/03/2011
Danny	The enthusiastic fun lover	BUMP	11/03/2011
Kathy	The glue	FANG, BUMP, Clown Army	16/03/2011
Martin	The walker	ANAWA, BUMP	4/05/2011
Johno	The concerned granddad	BUMP, PND, FANG	3/03/2011
			5/04/2011
Hilly	The young student	BUMP	19/02/2011
Rachel	The science student	BUMP	20/05/2011
Keira	The alternative mum	BUMP	15/02/2011
Lance	The quiet dad	BUMP	20/02/2011
Alice	The energetic environmentalist	BUMP, CCWA	6/06/2011
Inga	The full time volunteer	BUMP	22/02/2011
Donna	The artist & Indigenous campaigner	BUMP, WANFA	17/05/2011
Cara	The musician	BUMP	22/05/2011
Jay	The clown	FANG, Clown Army	13/05/2011

Marie	The passionate lawyer	WANFA	30/03/2011
Anna	The environmental advisor	PND, ANAWA	12/04/2011
Julie	The raging Granny	PND, ANAWA, Raging Grannies	15/04/2011
Tricia	The lifelong greenie	PND, Greens	28/04/2011
Verity	The global activist	Greens, iCAN	28/04/2011
Bridget	The energy advisor	ANAWA, PND	14/04/2011

Table 5.3: List of Phase Three interviewees

Sampling: Participant observation

In contrast to the prevailing positivist paradigm in conventional PR literature, ethnographically inspired research has been widely embraced by social movement scholars (see e.g. Klandermans & Staggenborg, 2002), who have emphasised the value of participant observation as a tool to gain insight into the everyday meanings of ‘doing social activism’ (e.g. Lichterman, 1998, 2002). Here, exploratory and qualitative approaches are recognised as valuable in enabling researchers to glean insight into and gain understanding of previously largely unstudied phenomena and publics.

Maintaining a physical presence over a prolonged period of time is crucial in ethnographic research (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). However, as discussed earlier, the absence of a stable ‘base’ for the movement restricted opportunities for participant observation to actions, events and planning meetings. It therefore proved challenging to become a part of the ‘anti-nuclear world’ that I was studying.

The increased visibility of new and social media helped me in this regard. By joining affiliated groups and following individuals on sites such as Facebook and Twitter, I was provided with valuable opportunities to familiarise myself further with the language of the movement and ensure that I would find out about upcoming (and past) events and initiatives. I would not describe myself as a typical ‘fly on the wall’ observer. Facebook groups and pages, such as ‘ANAWA’ or ‘Anti-Nuclear’, are usually open to anyone. However, discussions on these sites were rather limited. Their prime benefit appeared to be as a one-way, broadcast medium, announcing new developments or upcoming actions. In contrast to this, becoming a ‘Facebook friend’ or following an individual on Twitter required approval, or at a minimum resulted in notification of the account holder. As such, my presence should have been known, although arguably not always consciously.

My aim was to observe WA anti-nuclear activists in a range of different settings, therefore ensuring that I would get a rounded, comprehensive insight into the movement's activities. Wherever possible, I joined in, thereby ensuring that I would blend in and my observation would be less obtrusive. Although Bryman (2008) described "hanging around" as a common strategy in ethnographic research, I discovered that I felt more comfortable if I had something to do. Establishing relationships and consequently having someone to greet and talk to equally made attending actions more rewarding. Handing out fliers or joining a parade was a minimal investment on my part, particularly when considering the rich, first-hand insights I gained as a result:

Date	Event	Type of observation
5/06/2009	BUMP launch, The Palms, Rokeby Road, Subiaco , on world environment day	participant
21/08/2009	School of Management Research Seminar - Scott Ludlam	participant
28/9-2/10 2009	Period of participant observation at ANAWA office	participant
10/11/2009	Protest at UWA nuclear conference	participant
19/11/2009	Protest outside BHP offices	participant
3/12/2009	Going Nuclear?' Townhall Debate	participant
8/03/2010	ANAWA representatives give briefing to PR students at Curtin University	participant
11/05/2010	ANAWA protest outside Uranium Conference in Mill Street, City - Take the Twinkle out of the Uranium Industry's Eyes, Hilton Hotel, 14 Mill Street, Perth	non-participant
15&16/5/2010	Get Up - 'Organising Community Change' Workshop	participant
8/06/2010	Curtin student presentations of campaign proposals at Conservation Council	participant
13/07/2010	Australia's Nuclear Options' - information event at Curtin University	participant
21/07/2010	Anti-nuclear protest outside Uranium mining conference in Fremantle	participant
21/09/2010	Uranium Town 2010' - community consultation hypothetical, organised by IAP2	participant
4/11/2010	Anti Nuclear Information Extravaganza, City Farm	non-participant
14/11/2010	Mad Hatter float at Fremantle Carnival	participant
16/11/2010	Action outside BHP AGM at Convention Centre	participant
25/11/2010	Demonstration outside Paladin AGM at the Perth Yacht Club	non-participant
19/01/2011	Nuclear Transport / Train action	non-participant
25/01/2011	BUMP action meeting	participant
27/01/2011	Uranium Spill action in Cottesloe	participant
1/02/2011	BUMP action meeting	participant
8/02/2011	BUMP action meeting	participant
11/02/2011	BUMP stall at Murdoch University Open Day	participant
15/02/2011	BUMP action meeting	participant
18/02/2011	Toxic Breakfast at Barnett's action	participant
19-20/2/2011	Anti nuclear planning workshop in Guilderton	participant

22/02/2011	BUMP action meeting (creative session)	participant
25/02/2011	Action: Breakfast at Barnett's	participant
1/03/2011	BUMP action meeting	participant
8/03/2011	BUMP action meeting	participant
11/03/2011	Action: Breakfast at Barnett's	participant
22/03/2011	BUMP action meeting	participant
30/03/2011	Spontaneous action targeting the Prime Minister at Curtin House	participant
2/04/2011	Community Voices, as part of WANFA, Camp Woody	participant
5/04/2011	BUMP action meeting	participant
14/04/2011	Uranium Summit Action	participant
19/04/2011	Legal Training for activists	participant
	BUMP Action meeting	participant
26/04/2011	Chernobyl Day, information event at Forrest Place	participant
3/05/2011	BUMP Action meeting	participant
15/05/2011	BUMP social	participant
17/05/2011	BUMP Action meeting	participant
22/05/2011	Spiritual workshop	participant
7/06/2011	Public Forum of the International Uranium Conference	participant
21/07/2011	Uranium Conference Protest	participant/observer

Table 5.4: List of observed actions and events

In contrast to launches, information events and fundraisers, 'actions' such as demonstrations and publicity stunts, would usually take place during working hours, which put restrictions on my ability to participate. I closely followed a number of additional events, which were either not publicly advertised or which I was unable to attend, via news media, social media and personal conversations.

Analysis

Although this is not a grounded theory study, this research draws on ideas from and features of grounded theory. Grounded theory is recognised as particularly suitable for exploring social organisations from the participants' point of view (Glaser, 1998); in this case, through the eyes of the WA ANM. Grounded theory "stresses the importance of allowing theoretical ideas to emerge out of one's data" (Bryman, 2008, p 373). This is particularly useful in this context, as it is characterised by limited existing scholarly research and a complex, unstructured network of activists, which is subject to constant change. Daymon and Holloway (2011) emphasise that "grounded theory is useful in situations where little is known about a particular topic or phenomenon" (p.133), which is particularly relevant in the context of this study, considering that despite the focus on activism in PR scholarship, to date little insight is available from the activist perspective.

Developed by two sociologists, Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory emerged in the 1960s as an alternative to the then dominant positivist research paradigm. Since then it has become popular within the social sciences, particularly within a qualitative context. Researchers enter the process without any prior assumptions, thereby concentrating on the discovery of emergent knowledge, shaped from the data. The fundamental idea is that theory is advanced during each step of data collection and development, requiring constant comparison between data and analysis. As such, the analysis of data commences as soon as the first data samples are collected, and continues in a cyclical fashion, until theoretical saturation is achieved, i.e. until new data does not generate any new information, but rather fits into already established categories. Charmaz has challenged Strauss and Glaser's (1967) notion that theory is to be discovered as emerging from the data, entirely separate from the scientific observer. She argues "neither data nor theories are discovered" (Charmaz, 2006, p.10). Instead, they are part of the world we study as researchers, which means that we 'construct' our theories through our past and present involvement, as well as through our interactions with people, research practices, etc. I concur with Charmaz's (2006) argument that "any theory can only claim to offer an 'interpretive' portrayal of the studied world, and not an exact picture of it" (p. 10). Within the context of this study, this means that although I aimed to enter the research process without any pre-conceived ideas, I nevertheless recognise that my choices, my own presence, my background and consequent approach to data analysis undoubtedly influence the way I interpret actions by and insights gained into the WA anti nuclear movement. As Daymon and Holloway (2011) emphasise, as a researcher my role was to act as "an interpreter of the data, not just [as] a reporter or describer of a situation" (p.134). However, I do not claim that my interpretation is detached from my personal background and prior knowledge. I have taken a number of precautions to ensure high quality research outcomes, which are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

As with a grounded theory approach, my theoretical ideas advanced from one research phase to the next. The entire research process has been iterative and inductive, as common in qualitative research (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). I commenced studying activism in Western Australia without initially knowing exactly what (and who) I was looking for. However, I did know that I wanted to focus on activists as communicators and relate this study to the existing literature on activism in public relations. Therefore, in contrast to a 'pure' grounded theory researcher, I did enter this study with some ideas and a particular focus. Throughout the process

I referred to literature related to emerging patterns and themes, narrowed my research focus and developed my research questions. For example, my early observations motivated me to study Bourdieu's *Theory of Practice*, and to consequently apply some of his ideas and concepts to help analyse my findings. Ethnography literature in particular aided me in understanding my experience and challenges as a researcher in the field. As I narrowed my research focus to the WA ANM and stronger themes emerged, my research became deductive. However, this stage did not commence until the final phase of my study, as I sought to find out more from participants about key themes, such as the use of humour in activism, the activist identity, and the (perceived) role of activists in society. Only during this last, in- depth phase was I able to truly advance and develop my ideas, particular in relation to activists as social observers and active citizens.

From grounded theory, I also adopted "memoing", i.e. the writing of field notes and other types of written (and verbal) records, as a key feature of this study. These "stimulate[d] my thinking" (Daymon & Holloway, 2011, p. 311) and I recorded observations on an ongoing basis. This technique enabled me to document my journey and development as a researcher, as well as to reflect on emerging theoretical propositions. For example, earlier reflective notes document my doubt about the focus of this study, and concerns about how my public relations peers would perceive the research (see p. 299). Later memos enabled me to keep a record of meetings and conversations (see page 300) and to further develop my existing observations and ideas (e.g. Appendix 10.5).¹⁶ As such, memoing performed a central role in the coding and theory development process.

Data, such as memos, reflections, transcripts, images, audio recordings and other written material have been stored and coded with the aid of the software package NVivo Version 8 and 9. The central storage location enabled the continuous analysis and coding of data throughout this study. It allowed the data to gain meaning and further areas for data collection to be identified.

As Charmaz (2006) explains: "Coding is more than a beginning; it shapes an analytical frame from which you build the analysis" (p.45). As such coding represents the crucial link between the collection of data and the development of emergent theory. It is through this process that data gains meaning and directions for further data collection emerge. Charmaz distinguishes between two main forms

¹⁶ Note: I have included some samples of my memoing in the appendix. However, the content of many of my notes is confidential and would negatively impact on study participants if they were to be disclosed (both in terms of trust in me as the researcher and strategic capabilities)

or phases of coding, namely initial and focused coding. In the initial coding process, I focused on fragments of data, and then swiftly moved through the material whilst maintaining an open mind, as Charmaz suggests. Coding at this stage included in vivo codes, i.e. words and phrases used by the participants in this study:

Examples: In vivo coding

Participant	Extracts from WA ANM interviews	Code
Donna	Well for me it [becoming an activist] was a total accident I didn't plan it in any way, shape or form. I met – do you want me to tell you how I...?	Accidental activist'
Joy	K. has been very supportive because she's actually engaged with me in it at times. P. looked after the girls for the seven, eight years that I was in [full time politics]. He stayed home and was the house parent, you know, and S. is a wonderful emotional support so the family is very important there.	family support is crucial'
Donna	“I am a singer and an actor....and now, they call me an activist. What I am, is a caretaker of my country”	Caretaker of the country'
Alicia	The company's packed up, gone away, spent their profits, shared them around and probably fucking up somebody else's country. That's the win/win, yeah that's the win/win they talk about	No 'win-win situation'
Anna	I think that to have been and activist in the 80's was just to have had the absolute best of it. I'd love to bottle it and go back and visit it. ...It was just like paradise.... It was fabulous.	having the best time when being active' (activism nostalgia)
Alice	while I'm doing those things, I want to have fun too because there's no point in just being all really serious about it all the time	need to have fun'
Johno	I think you can say things in song that you couldn't possibly say in just straight talk, could you?	communicating in songs'

Illustration 5.5: Examples of in vivo coding

Focused coding consisted of selecting the most common codes, or those that appeared to be most revealing about the data. I repeatedly and continuously studied interview transcripts and observation notes to identify common themes. Finally, the data was re-explored, re-evaluated and re-coded, which lead to a sophisticated level of theoretical coding, the investigation of relationships and eventually the development of theoretical propositions:

Examples: humour coding - identifying broad themes in Nvivo

Source	Quotation	Code	Category
Alice	I want to always remember that we are tiny insignificant human beings and nothing really matters at all times. And that means that while I'm doing those things, I want to have fun too because there's no point in just being all really serious about it		Humour as (activist) sustainability tool
Observation 16th may 2010	"this is hard – but also can be really fun"		
Email communication 24th September 2011	The Freo Festival is not far off and Godzilla is screaming for help to make a special appearance this year ;-)		
Alice	Having fun, for me it's even more important because I spend my days working and studying in something quite serious, policy and politics. And then sometimes I just want to wear a funny outfit and do something fun. But that still is in the vein of what I have been doing.		
Jay	It wasn't just a meeting. It was games. It was fun, it was playing. It was being young and being creative and being effective and it worked really well.	the fun factor	
Verity	Humour and hope are essential to overcome psychic numbing and motivate action.		
Verity	The despair that people often feel when you face up to this issue is kind of profound and devastating and if you don't provide hope and humour you will just drown in the horror of it		
Rachel	I definitely think humour is important for mental health and wellbeing and if it can be fun and not heavy and if it yes, draws away from the fact that maybe action won't make a difference or it will be lost or whatever.	coping strategy	
Observation, 21st July 2011	Alice had a ball dancing around in a protective suit and masks to Britney Spear's Toxic, trying to broom up a 'uranium' oxide spill. I am not convinced conference delegates 'got it'. Then again, they weren't the target audience.		
Jay	Absolutely energised, excited about the possibilities, maybe a little bit worn out because you've just done a fair bit of running around and a bit of exercise, but you still feel – I don't know, I think it gets the blood running and it gets the creative juices flowing	re-energising experience	
Observation, 17th February 2011	Similar with the naughty actions, Mad Hatter Tea Parties, nuclear spills on the beach, nukes on the train...they all involve a level of drama, excitement, being out there...but also being in it together	sense of community	

Rachel	But at least the individual got something out of it and whether it was a social interaction or whether it was to laugh, or something is very important to keep people strong and stop them panning out		
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Illustration 5.6: Humour coding: Identifying broad themes

Issues of Quality

Research quality has traditionally been characterised by validity and reliability, both of which are derived from the positivist paradigm. However, within the context of social movement research, I question the value of these two measures. In agreement with LeCompte and Goertz (1982), I argue that it is impossible to literally ‘freeze’ a social setting and its circumstances to make it replicable. In order to demonstrate my competence as a researcher (and ultimately the quality of this study) I am applying Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) concepts of authenticity and trustworthiness, which have become a more widely accepted alternative within the qualitative research context (Daymon & Holloway, 2011).

‘Authenticity’ is concerned with the ‘true’ and accurate reporting of participants’ ideas, which I ensure by positioning anti-nuclear activists not solely as respondents to my questions, but as active participants and contributors to my study. I have applied a number of strategies to ensure the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of this project, all of which contribute to its trustworthiness. Thick descriptions allow readers to make an informed judgement about my analysis and conclusion, as well as the applicability of my findings in other research settings. My aim is to provide deep, detailed insights into the research settings, enabling readers to visualise actions, and feel the energy and experience that activists slip into their various character roles.

My prolonged engagement with the movement is clearly outlined throughout this document, and is supported by a comprehensive audit trail, as well as ongoing critical reflection on my experience as a researcher. Member validation, or member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), were a crucial tool in ensuring that my understanding of the data corresponds with participants’ interpretation of ‘their world’. Recognising activists’ resource restrictions, most of these checks were completed in an informal manner. Particularly during the formative studies, I usually restricted myself to a follow up email, thanking the participant for their time, whilst including only a brief summary of some of the key points. Where full transcripts

(audio recording as opposed to written notes) where available, these were made available for further comment. This frequently led to further email exchanges and face-to-face conversations, providing me with opportunities to further clarify any emerging questions. The majority of participants did not comment directly in response to the transcript, however, one activist requested a second interview in order to share his emerging thoughts and observations.

Although this was a largely homogenous sample of anti-nuclear activists, I nevertheless recognise that individuals were participating in the BUMP campaign to various degrees. They had slightly different motivations and came from a range of educational and demographic backgrounds. However, a common characteristic appeared to be “lack of time”. Bryman (2008) stated that it is “unlikely that social scientific analysis will be meaningful to research participants” (p.378). Considering the prevailing resource restrictions, I believe this is particularly valid in this context. Therefore, instead of providing a copy of my final report, I have made myself available for further conversations and have offered to present on key findings.

The multi-method data collection approach has enabled me to gain a more complex understanding of the WA ANM. Without participant observation I would not have become aware of a number of activists, nor would I have been able to see activism ‘in action’. The interviews enabled me to gain a more focused, in depth insight, build one-on-one relationships and seek answers to questions that emerged during the participant observation process. Additional documents allowed me to follow up on events, as well as find out about less publicised actions and social events. It is the combination of these three data collection methods, and the opportunities for triangulation they provided, that essentially contributed to the overall quality and depth of this study.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations have been crucial in the context of this study, as I have relied on data collection through human interaction. I obtained research approval from the appropriate university ethics departments (both at Curtin and Murdoch University). However, Daymon and Holloway (2011) emphasise that research conduct will essentially be guided by the researcher’s personal ethical values, as well as their sensitivity to the cultural context. I suggest this is particularly crucial in this context, as the WA ANM was built on trust, respect and tolerance. The movement itself was

welcoming and accepting. Criticism or negativity were rare. However, this also signifies that any betrayal of this underlying current of trust would have resulted in the withdrawal of access. I felt that this would particularly apply to the trust gatekeepers had put in me. People like Jo Vallentine and the two Uraniumfree Campaigners at the Conservation Council held a high level of power over this study. Without their approval, and that of later gatekeepers, this study would have been impossible.

Daymon and Holloway (2011) list five 'ethical principles and conventions', which I benchmark this study against. I explain these in the following paragraphs, exploring the right of free and informed choice, protection from harm, privacy, autonomy and honesty.

The right of free and informed choice

Participants had the right to withhold or withdraw their cooperation at any stage of this study. I realised early that some interest activists were particularly protective, sceptical and sometimes almost fearful about the potential implications of their actions. In one case, I engaged in a number of lengthy email exchanges with a community organiser. This continued for over six months. However, although she initiated the contact and demonstrated keen interest in sharing her concerns, suspicions and activities, the individual nevertheless decided not to officially participate in the study. Despite the richness of the information provided to me in confidence, I am unfortunately not able to use any of this in my study.

Protection from harm

I ensured that no emotional, physical or reputational harm should come to the people who participated in this study. I found that in some circumstances activists enjoyed the rare opportunity to reflect on their work and actions, whilst sharing some of their insights in a one-on-one interview. Any information that was disclosed as confidential was treated as such and is not included in this study.

The Australian Research Council's (ARC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (Australian Government, 2007) emphasises the need for reflection on personal relationships that may develop between the researcher and participants, as well as the underlying importance of 'respect'. I felt that reflection

with the help of personal research memos helped me identify, address and eliminate potential issues of concern.

Privacy

Confidentiality and anonymity of participants has been maintained through this study. In line with the Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research (The Australian Government, 2007) I have not identified participants, “unless they have agreed to be identified” (p. 27). As I explained earlier, the majority of participants were happy to be identified as part of this study. However, due to a request for anonymity by a high profile coordinator, I have decided to utilise pseudonyms throughout this thesis, in order to protect the movement, its affiliated groups and organisations as well as individual activists.

Ensuring privacy was easier during the early stage of the study, which covered a wide range of dissimilar organisations, than it was during stages two and three of the data collection, when I focused exclusively on the anti-nuclear movement. With a State population of less than 2.3 million, the activist network is tight knit. Movement insiders may be able to re-identify some activists on the basis of the comments and thoughts shared within this thesis. Furthermore, the anti-nuclear movement is relatively small, with only a limited number of key activists and spokespeople, which could be easily named and identified by fellow members and the wider WA and Australian community. However, as participants’ activist activities are linked to their personal identity, as discussed in Chapter 8, I do not anticipate any negative impact, even if key organisers were to be re-identified by peers within the movement.

Autonomy

All interviewees were provided with a comprehensive information sheet and given the opportunity to withdraw cooperation at any time. Consent was sought separately at each of the three data collection stages. Obtaining consent for the participant observation part was more challenging. As required by institutional research approval processes, the ethical framework for this study was aligned with the Australian Research Council’s (ARC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (Australian Government, 2007), which requires researchers to reflect upon potential risks to participants. The national guidelines are published on

the website of the National Health and Medical Research Council, which illustrates the document's focus on clinical research methods. Qualitative research methods are addressed separately, covering approximately three of the 98 pages in the document. I obtained prior approval for the week I spent in the ANAWA office and further detailed my intentions in the information sheet.

However, the fluid structure of social movements, and in particular the flat, dispersed nature of the ANM WA, provided a number of challenges when aiming to meet requirements of largely positivistic orientated institutional and national research guidelines. For example, the university's ethics committee required written endorsement of my project by a decision maker, who was impossible to recruit, as the ANM WA is a collective of individuals, which historically relied on consensus-based decision making. My research proposal was discussed in length at one of the weekly 'action meetings' and verbally endorsed, based on trust in both my intentions as a researcher and movement participant, with the unspoken knowledge that this could be withdrawn at any time. This left me with verbal support for my study, but still without a designated person who was able to formally approve my presence. Aware of the dilemma I was confronted with, the minute-taker eventually offered to sign off on the record of the meeting.

Other observation took place in public spaces. However, as Wiles, Crow, Charles and Heath (2007) conclude in their comprehensive discussion of the notion of informed consent: "In some observational studies it is not possible to inform all participants that they are being observed" (p. 10). Whilst key activists were aware of my role as researcher, it was impossible to inform people on the street, taking flyers from me, or bystanders at an action. It would have also disadvantaged the movement itself if I had taken valuable time during an already resource restricted action to take late-coming activists aside in order to inform them of my role as participant observer.

Despite its positivistic focus, the ARC's National Statement acknowledges that "in some circumstances consent may be implied by participation" (Australian Government, 2007, p.28). The UK Economic and Social Research Council takes this idea further, by noting that in some participatory research "formalised or bureaucratic ways of securing consent should be avoided in favour of fostering relationships in which ongoing ethical regard for participants is to be sustained" (Economic and Social Research Council, 2010, p. 30). This recognises that in some circumstances it can be challenging, or arguably even counterproductive, to obtain

written consent. During the early stages of this project my main focus was on gaining an understanding of activism in WA, to establish trust and recruit potential participants, who could help shape the design of the overall study. Interpretive researchers (e.g. Daymon & Hodges, 2009) have emphasised that this involvement in and familiarisation with the field is crucial to the overall success of a scholarly study. Particularly during this period I noticed that many conversations emerged serendipitously at public actions, which made it impossible to distribute information sheets. Many activists were enthusiastic to engage and share their ideas, but appeared to shy away from the formalised interview process, concerned about time implications and doubt about the value of their potential contribution. Ethics guidelines fail to acknowledge this perceived risk of 'losing face' and the extent to which research procedures may disadvantage already resource (particularly time) poor social movements.

For reasons disclosed earlier, I agreed to make a copy of my final thesis on request, but also offered to present my key findings to interested participants, in what I perceive to be a more activist-friendly format. During the early stages I relied on a thank you note and a brief interview summary, whilst providing full transcripts for any audio recorded interviews. This provided participants with an additional opportunity to provide feedback, clarify any issues or even ask for certain details to be omitted in this study. However, the vast majority of participants either did not respond to my messages, or did so only very briefly, which I assume was another sign of activists' lack of resources (particularly time).

Honesty

Despite the outlined difficulties in making every person I came in contact with aware of my role as a researcher, I was conscious to remain open and honest about my intentions. On one hand, I could identify with the cause, but on the other, I had a clear (research) agenda for my participation.

Copyright for images, quotes and comments has been attributed to the original sources. However, despite my intention to be open and honest in my research, new technologies again provide a number of challenges. For example, in this study I have used images as part of my field notes, as well as for illustrative purposes (Bryman, 2008). Permission can be sought to re-produce social media content and digital photographs. However, many of the images taken during the participant observation phase depict demonstrations and actions. In many cases it is

impossible to identify and seek permission from every single individual in these images, particularly when these include bystanders. Despite the public nature of actions, due to ethical and moral, rather than legal considerations, I decided to only include images that do not clearly identify participants. This includes the concealing of identifying features with masques, face paint and costumes, as well as the angle from which photographs were taken.

Demetrious (2006) argues that 'public relations' is a loaded term, with connotations for activists as a self-serving capitalist activity. I needed to be aware that participants might have interpreted the role, responsibilities and intentions of public relations differently to how I do. This interpretation could have had the potential to impact negatively on access provided and trust in my intentions as researcher. The ARC's National Statement on Ethical Conduct (2007) recognises that limited disclosure to participants may "sometimes be justifiable" (p.23) to ensure that research aims can be achieved. Without actively concealing my professional role as an academic in public relations, I decided to remove "public relations" from my job title and use "communications" interchangeably. I remained open about my professional role, research intentions and involvement in the public relations industry throughout this research project. However, I decided not to actively 'promote' the public relations label. I believe this decision was justified, as this study focused exclusively on low risk participants, who were not affected adversely.

Other issues: new and social media

Ethical guidelines in regard to the use of new and social media are still limited. Daymon and Holloway (2011) predominantly cover the use of discussion forums, whilst Hookway (2008) provides some useful insights into the use of blogs in social research. However, social networking platforms such as Twitter and Facebook have to date been given little attention in terms of their legal as well as ethical implications in research literature. In Australia, all Internet content is automatically copyrighted (Australian Copyright Council, 2012b). The *Copyright Act* (1968) (Australian Government) protects a range of original literary, dramatic, musical or artists 'works', including those posted online. This means that the moment a photo, status update or comment is uploaded to a Facebook profile or group page, it is protected by copyright, which remains indefinitely with the producer, i.e. the person who took the photo or who wrote the original update. Whilst this may appear restrictive for research purposes, under the 'fair dealing' provisions of the Copyright

Act 1968, researchers can copy material without the permission of the copyright owner, provided their copying is for the purpose of research or study (sections 40 and 103C), or criticism or review (sections 41 and 103A) (Australian Copyright Council, 2012a). The fair dealings provision therefore justifies the 'lurking' of researchers on Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the dynamics, motivations and communication abilities of a social movement, such as the WA ANM, under the provision that individuals are not disadvantaged or otherwise negatively impacted.

In addition to the 'fair use' provision for scholarly activities, the government introduced 'moral rights' into the *Copyright Act* in December 2000 (Australian Copyright Council, 2012c). This amendment stipulates two rights: the right of attribution of authorship, and the right of integrity of authorship, i.e. not to have their work treated in a derogatory way. Hookway (2008) highlighted the evident tension between these two entitlements. Whilst copyright holders are to be acknowledged, the public recognition of their involvement in activist activities, even in the form of taking official photos of an act of public disobedience, may negatively impact the reputation of the creator; for example reducing their prospects in an upcoming job interview. However, section 195AR of the Australian *Copyright Act*, acknowledges that under certain conditions non-attribution of the author may be deemed reasonable (Australian Government). By using pseudonyms and codes, I have used what Bruckman (2002) refers to as a 'moderate disguise', with the intention to ensure the protection of the creator's identity over the credit to their authorship.

After careful deliberation I defined my personal code of conduct for research via social media as an extension to the Australian copyright law. I decided that I would actively join relevant groups, with the intention to learn more about upcoming events and developments. However, I would not actively 'befriend' activists on social networking sites, unless they initiated the contact. As my involvement increased and friendships developed, a number of activists expressed interest in connecting with me. However, participants' identity has been protected at all times. The inclusion of references to exchanges and opinions expressed has been kept to a minimum. The primary aim of my online presence was to gain a better understanding of what WA ANM activists do on a daily basis and how they communicate with each other and their wider support community.

Final thoughts and reflections on my role as researcher

In his widely referenced classic *Tales of the Field*, Van Maanen (1988) compares the fieldwork experience to a self-imposed exile. One of the key challenges has been to learn how to move amongst strangers and handle a wide range of feelings, from embarrassment and isolation, to warmth, enjoyment and even a sense of adventure. The social movement scholar Lichterman (1998) describes the participant observation process as an opportunity to "get to experience the same exhilaration, frustration, and awkwardness as activists we study" (p. 401). Once settled, the participation element kept me motivated; however, it was also an easy distraction. The entire research experience has been equal to a rollercoaster ride of emotions; as you make friends and become committed it becomes increasingly difficult to 'jump off', complete the data collection phase, and move on to the analysis.

Based on my continuous observation and reflection, I question if any researcher will ever be able to claim a position as a genuine and fully respected participant. As participant observer, I have been constantly divided between my role as committed, immersed and engaged insider, and the professional pressure to act as an objective, observant and dispassionate outsider. I furthermore question if a participant observer would always know if he or she was excluded from selective information. This tension, alongside the underlying fear of (sudden) access withdrawal, has been a constant companion throughout the research journey. As raised by Daymon and Hodges (2009), I query if despite the best intentions, relationships between researchers and participants can ever be 'wholly genuine', or if they always remain "somewhat instrumental and exploitative" (p. 432).

Chapter summary

In this chapter I have outlined the rationale behind the chosen methodology for this study. To overcome the scarcity of existing knowledge and emic insight into activist communication, a single case study approach was selected, with the aim of collecting rich, in-depth information across a range of dimensions. The resulting study is of an exploratory nature, based on predominantly ethnographic techniques, with the aim of providing emic insights into the anti-nuclear debate and thick description of the movement's communication efforts. This study has been influenced by a grounded theory approach, as this is considered particularly suitable

for the exploration of social organisations from the participants' point of view. These methods allowed me to identify codes, categories and eventually theoretical propositions, which I discuss in the following chapters.

Qualitative scholars are confronted by significant challenges when investigating public relations in cultural and societal contexts that are 'foreign' to their own. When the researcher is embarking into unfamiliar and largely uncharted territory, a number of decisions have to be made to ensure the quality of the research outcome. I argue that this is particularly relevant when studying activist organisations, which are traditionally characterised by a lack of resources, a fluid and dispersed group membership, and a certain amount of suspicion towards outsiders. Consequently, gaining and maintaining access represented a major challenge. Additionally, 'trust' emerged as a crucial factor in determining the success of this study.

Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's notions of reflexivity and participant objectivation, I have reflected on the ongoing tension between my dual role as participant and researcher, as well as the emotional and methodological challenges experienced whilst conducting my research into the WA anti-nuclear movement.

Chapter 6

Humour as social capital in anti-nuclear activism

Although extensively examined in social science literature (e.g. Bogad, 2010; Bruner, 2005; Chvasta, 2006; Shepard, 2011; Weissberg, 2005), humour is not a characteristic that is frequently associated with activism in mainstream Western culture and psyche. However, humour has emerged as a key theme in this study. Based on my participant observation experience with the WA ANM, I argue that comedy, wit and hilarity represent unique and crucial sources of capital for activists. From the enlisting of the Clown Army and sing-alongs with the Raging Grannies, to street theatre, publicity stunts and community breakfasts outside the State Premier's electorate office, comedy and fun play a prominent role in the activities and identity of the WA anti-nuclear movement. The communication style and tools of activists therefore clearly differentiate them from those of corporations, who rarely apply humour in a professional context. The unfamiliarity and adverse connotations associated with humour in a business context may however lead to activists being injudiciously misunderstood or dismissed as unprofessional, amateurish and attention seeking. Regardless, this study concludes that humour fulfils a number of vital internal and external functions within the network that ultimately enable activists to increase their share of power and hence opportunity to challenge the status quo. Most notably, humorous actions and initiatives enable activists to build bonding (social) capital, hence ensuring the sustainability of individuals and the survival of the movement over time.

Four key themes have emerged from my data: Humorous actions enable activists to create a sense of community by attracting people's attention and drawing in diverse audiences. Humour can be used as an educational tool, making science-based and often confrontational, or even disturbing, information more interesting, digestible and memorable. Humour also plays a crucial role within the movement itself; firstly by ensuring actions and participation are sustainable over a period of time and secondly by actively shaping the WA ANM's collective identity. This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the data, grouped under these four headings and cross-referenced with relevant literature. Finally, the integrated nature and crucial function of humour for WA ANM activists is illustrated based on the example of the Clown Army.

The role of humour in literature: context

The role and function of humour in activism has to date been largely ignored in public relations and communications research. Notable exceptions are Kay Weaver's case study into the Mothers Against Genetic Engineering group in New Zealand, in which she positions carnivalesque activism as a public relations genre in its own right (Weaver, 2010, 2013), and in the multidisciplinary works by Marty Branagan, throughout which he draws on his own experience as an environmental activist in Australia (Branagan, 2005, 2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2010).

Although multidisciplinary by nature, 'humorology' has evolved into a field of research in its own right (Hart & Bos, 2007), with dedicated scholarly journals, such as *Humor: The International Journal of Humor Research* (see e.g. Apte, 2009), *The European Journal of Humor Research* and *The Israeli Journal of Humor Research*. Humour has a long history as a tool to "confront privilege, weaken the power of oppressors and empower resistance" (Branagan, 2007b, p. 470). A classic example is the royal court jester, who could express critical thoughts about policies without fearing punishment (Hart & Bos, 2007). Scholars refer to humour as a "powerful communication tool" (J. C. Meyer, 2000, p.328), which is frequently employed as a communication strategy in its own right (Hart & Bos, 2007). Humour complements other forms of activism (Branagan, 2007b), in particular political activism and protest (Bruner, 2005; Hart & Bos, 2007). In this context, Marty Branagan (2007b) highlights the American community organiser Saul Alinsky, the author of arguably the most commonly referred to activist texts *Rules for Radicals* (Alinsky, 1971). He argues that humour can be used as a non-alienating, two-way communication tool that undermines and deflates the powerful and exposes the absurdity of a given political situation. In fact, Alinsky referred to satire and ridicule as the most potent weapons known to humankind. The importance of humour has been extensively documented in activists' accounts of campaigns, such as the history of the anti-nuclear movement in Western Australia (Kearns, 2004) and Munro, et al.'s (1996) colourful insight into a multitude of Australian campaigns in *How to Make Trouble and Influence People: Australasian Pranks, Hoaxes and Political Mischief Making* (see also later versions by McIntyre, 2009; McIntyre, et al., 2009). Activist guides and 'how to' literature similarly touch on the concepts of humour and being unconventional as effective means to attract attention (e.g. Alinsky, 1946; Alinsky, 1971).

Humorous protest literature has paid particular attention to the rich history of carnivalesque action (see e.g. Bruner, 2005; Hart & Bos, 2007; Weaver, 2010), providing insight into situations where political protest was only possible, or non-punishable, if enacted in a joking, entertaining manner (Hart, 2007). As masquerades could hide the identity of participants, members of the “lower classes arguably exploited these events to express their hostility towards the ruling oligarchy” (Hart, 2007, p.4). Although both have lost much of their traditional political character, two classical examples are Mardi Gras and Carnival, vibrant street festivals that take place in various major cities around the world in the lead up to Lent¹⁷. Both events commenced as colourful, fun and inclusive public performances with a strong political message, that tolerated and even enabled the breaking of taboos and the expression of repressed behaviours and social tensions, such as those “suffered by the Brazilian minorities, which are little voiced during the apparent normality of the rest of the year” (Correa, 2012). By means of song, dance and catchy music they draw audiences in, effectively recruiting them as an extension to the official performers. Hart (2007) explains how public parades offer such opportunities to activist minorities like the LGBTQ¹⁸ community: “By inviting the public to laugh with them, the participants in these parades aim to establish peaceful change in the existing homophobic discourse” (Hart, 2007, p.16).

Hence, people who are “usually divided by the barriers of caste property, profession and age” (Bakhtin, 1984, p.10) are suddenly considered equal and free to actively participate. As such, carnivalesque activism has the potential to communicate a message to a wider audience as it draws on shared human experiences (Bakhtin, 1984). In *Rabelais and his World*, Bakhtin (1984) illustrates how carnival used to function as a social institution. Due to the temporary suspension of hierarchies and distinctions, ridicule and the symbolic crowning and consequent de-crowning of a mock king was tolerated. Bakhtin argued that kings permitted and even endorsed carnivalesque action as an outlet for aggression and rebellion against norms, thus protecting their own status in the long term.

“Naughty” actions and community building

Scholars have explored humour primarily as a method to attract support for activist causes, by means of creating a stark contrast to the negative didacticism of violent protest, as so commonly depicted in the mainstream media (Branagan, 2007a;

¹⁷ Lent is the Christian season of preparation before Easter

¹⁸ Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer

Weaver, 2010). The humorous approach therefore particularly suits the WA ANM, a collective that has historically been committed to non-violent action and peaceful protest. This is illustrated in a number of examples over the following paragraphs, including illustrations 6.1 – 6.9.



Illustration 6.1: Screenshot of Nuclear Transport Action (Uranium Free Campaign, 2011)

One of the major challenges WA anti-nuclear activists face is the size of the State and the fact that the majority of the WA community lives in the capital Perth, while uranium operations are located in remote and outback locations. These are usually hundreds of kilometres from the closest major settlement. For example, the proposed Wiluna uranium mine site is around 1000 kilometres north-east of Perth. Therefore, the average (West) Australian will most likely never be exposed to uranium ore, nor the impacts of uranium mining on the local community and environment. As a result, the (West) Australian public is largely ambivalent about the practice and impacts of uranium mining, due to social and geographical distancing. The pro-uranium State government is very much aware of this implied benefit in their struggle to influence public opinion and support, which is illustrated by the fact that the Premier has ruled out any shipments through West Australian ports. If shipments were to go through residential Perth, opposition would most certainly increase. Instead, it has been proposed that uranium ore will be shipped via Adelaide, South Australia, which is home to one of the world's largest uranium mines, BHP's Olympic Dam. WA ANM activists continuously referred to what they describes as an increasing level of "apathy" in the (West) Australian community. Being aware of this significant disadvantage in their battle to win over the hearts,

minds and essential support of the community, WA anti-nuclear activists embarked on a number of publicity stunts, with the aim to raise awareness, engage citizens and encourage discussion.

In late January 2010, for example, five activists in RAD (Radiation) suits and protective masks (plus three support crew) boarded an inner-city commuter train in central Perth, accompanied by a number of metal drums, marked as containing radioactive material. Once on board they calmly stood amongst other passengers, as if this was part of their daily routine. The action itself had mixed outcomes, including a physical assault on one activist by a disturbed and aggressive community member. However, the action succeeded in creating a buzz and heightened level of excitement amongst activists, prompting a second public action within a week. On the back of the attention the train action had received, attendees at the weekly BUMP (Ban Uranium Mining Permanently) Action Group meeting decided to target the State Premier's electorate, an affluent beach side community easily accessible via public transport, with a "nuclear spill" scenario. Apart from identifying the location, a limited amount of strategic planning went into this stunt. Instead, the focus emerging from the discussions was having fun, being somewhat controversial and "naughty". Even the timing was initially based on personal



Illustration 6.2: Photo of Beach Spill Action (Uranium Free Campaign, 2011)

preferences, before the group settled on an early morning start to target the hundreds of swimmers who typically descend on Cottesloe beach.

At 7.15am on 27th January 2010, beach goers faced three activists in RAD suits and protective masks, securing what appeared to be recently washed up radioactive metal drums. The

contrast this scenario created lends itself to humour: the harsh disparity between the industrial suits and community members in swimsuits; the rough and dirty drums against the backdrop of the pristine beach on a glorious summer day; as well as the implied danger of the radioactive symbol, in contrast to its peaceful, natural environment. The surreal, unexpected nature of the scenario prompted walkers to

stop, point, laugh and in many cases to approach the small group, keen to find out what was going on. There was also some exhausted headshaking, but overall the reactions were perceived as overwhelmingly positive. As Johnno explained:

[...] down there at Cottesloe, [...] you got types of people that wouldn't really approve of [...] anti-government type activity and wouldn't [see] nuclear, but in fact several of them stopped and asked and had quite a lot of interest. (Johnno, interview, 3rd March 2011)

This response corresponds to Bruner's (2005) claim that humorous activism is often more effective than "serious protest", by creating 'hooks' to engage people (Branagan, 2007a). In this example, the Nuclear Spill scenario provided a hook that encouraged the local community to engage with the nuclear topic. Rather than confront and repel, humorous activism such as this example creates common ground that enables further discussion, awareness raising and direct exchange with bystanders and curious members of the public. As Rachel explained, humorous actions:

...make people laugh.....and not only people who are there [participants & activists] but maybe outside it [bystanders]. You get the message across and they get a laugh out of it. (Rachel, interview, 20th May 2011)

The resulting sense of community or 'collective camaraderie' may even extend to law and order representatives (Branagan, 2007b) (as was the case in the train action, where police sided with activists rather than the aggressive community member) and other unlikely allies. The Toxic Spill action unexpectedly created the opportunity to engage directly with the uranium mining industry. A city-based executive for an international exploration company stopped on his way to work when he saw people in protective suits hauling what appeared to be nuclear drums along the beach. Although he emphasised that his main intention was to take a photo to "entertain" his colleagues in the Canadian head office, he nevertheless remained approachable and friendly. On opposite sides of the nuclear debate, the action provided activists and the executive with a unique opportunity for a meaningful exchange and a collective laugh. Even if the ultimate outcome was that both WA ANM activists and the mining representative agreed to disagree in regard to the safety and future of uranium mining, the humorous context nevertheless created common ground and a shared experience.

By creating enjoyable experiences for audiences and bystanders, humour first catches attention and then literally draws in the audience, effectively inviting it to

play an active part in the wider movement (Branagan, 2007a). In this example, participation involved asking questions and taking photos. Other public actions by the WA ANM invite audiences to join in by singing, clapping and laughing along. Rather than lecturing audiences or building physical barriers between activists and the community through blockading, marching or angry shouting, humour includes audiences and provides a starting point for dialogue and further engagement (Branagan, 2007b), as is demonstrated in the Nuclear Spill example above.

Humour is particularly crucial in the context of the WA ANM, which aims to raise awareness about an issue that is complex and at times confronting. As Verity explained, “nuclear apocalypse is really not funny” (interview, 28th April 2011). However, fear, horror and the prospect of nuclear war may alarm and repel audiences, rather than draw them in. Jay made the same point, noting that “people are deterred by too much seriousness in life” (interview, 13th Mary 2011). For Verity, “we need to make it meaningful and hopeful: humour can turn the horror of nuclear war into hope for preventing it”. Jay commented similarly: “It’s much more likely you get people thinking than handing out flyers or changing, simply because it’s fun”.

Throughout this study, activists have commented on the increasing level of ‘apathy’ that they have observed in (West) Australian culture. Humour may provide an opportunity to overcome this by relating to the Australian culture:

Unfortunately, there is a fair bit of apathy in our culture, but I think that’s almost why the creative stuff works a little bit better. In Australia people don’t want to be seen as too intense or too confrontational about any particular issue, but if you can put it in a humour form it does work a lot better, things like *Good News Week*, *Glass House* [both Australian public affairs comedy shows on TV], things like that, they’ve all been really successful. (Jay, interview, 13th Mary 2011)

The examples above illustrate that humorous actions enable activists to build what Bourdieu has labelled social capital, by expanding the movement and exposing the wider community to the issue at the heart of it (in this case: uranium mining). They do so temporarily, by offering inclusive fun and entertainment value that creates curiosity and literally draws people in. While confrontation, angry outburst and loud protests may alienate and repel bystanders, humorous actions create a common ground that enables the community to engage. Spectators thereby visually expand the WA ANM and increase the (perceived) support for anti-nuclear actions. This in turn impacts on how the WA ANM is perceived and recognised by decision makers, such as corporations, and in particular politicians, who continuously monitor public

sentiment and pertinent issues in their electorate. Increased social capital, that is an enlarged network of “relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu 1997, p. 51), thus results in more mobilisable resources (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), a greater presence of the WA ANM and heightened urgency for action on uranium mining.

According to Branagan (2005, 2007b) the main objective of activists is not to temporarily increase their social capital, but ultimately to “convert” audiences in order to facilitate grassroots change. Based on my observations I disagree, arguing that the WA ANM’s ultimate purpose is broader, as activists set out to help audiences gain perspective and reach a standpoint, even if this results in being pro-nuclear. The focus therefore shifts from conversion to informed decision making. As community members engage with activists and find out more about uranium mining, the nuclear cycle, the movement and its focus, they may start to identify with the WA ANM and choose to increase their level of involvement. This could simply be in the form of openly expressing an anti-nuclear stance, and may lead to longer lasting contributions, such as donations, sponsorship or active involvement in the movement itself. Putnam (1998, 2000) and Gittel and Vidal (1998) refer to this type of social capital as “bridging (social) capital”, as it establishes connections beyond the established group or community, potentially even across different social divides. It therefore enables the movement to leverage the skills and problem solving abilities of other people. New affiliates may, for example, provide writing skills, time to distribute flyers, mining specific knowledge and expertise, access to resources, creative abilities or contact to other groups or individuals, hence increasing the social capital, i.e. the reach and capabilities of the WA ANM as a whole.

One example that is commonly referred to in relation to bridging capital amongst activists is the Greens Senator Scott Ludlam, a graphic designer by trade, who started to offer his design skills to the movement after attending an information session. He has subsequently worked for the Australian Greens Party, entering Federal politics in 2007, where he is a prominent voice, in particular on nuclear and uranium mining related issues (The Australian Greens, 2012). When joining the movement in the late 1990s, Ludlam initially added to the WA ANMs social capital by contributing his graphic design skills. However, since then he has contributed his time, personal resources, skills, industry specific expertise, office space and contacts, which most notably now link to national and international networks, as well as Federal politicians. A second example is Jo Vallentine’s daughter Kate Vallentine, who has been involved in the movement to varying degrees all her life

and was employed in an official capacity by ANAWA during the preliminary stages of data collection. Through both her own and her boyfriend's passion for music, they met an Indigenous artist and activist, who is now one of the major links to the Aboriginal community in WA. Donna has also been instrumental in the establishment and visibility of the Western Australian Nuclear Free Alliance (WANFA). She has contributed to the WA ANM's social capital by speaking and singing at events. However, most notably she has extended the movement's reach and visibility by adding credibility, knowledge and access to Indigenous groups.

In both of these examples humour may have been only one contributing factor during the recruitment process of these new activists. Personal identification with the cause undeniably plays a crucial role. However, the WA ANM's positive attitude, commitment to non-violence, and emphasis on fun—or what activists referred to as “naughty actions”—arguably signify what the movement stands for and literally draws in supporters and potential activists. This in turn builds the WA ANM's social capital. Rachel explained the importance of humour and the ability to create enjoyable experiences for new BUMPers (BUMP collective affiliated activists):

Life is already miserable enough, people need something light, such as a funny online campaign or a video to draw them in. There are already enough pressures and worries in daily life... (Rachel)

On reflection, the Radioactive Spill action lost some of its potential impact due to a lack of strategic planning (1.5 days' notice, over a public holiday), a late start that resulted in missing most of the swimmers and the notable absence of the main initiator on the day. However, from a WA ANM activist perspective this initiative was a success as it allowed participants to express themselves in a creative way, enforced a sense of solidarity and – most importantly – allowed activists to confront and engage with the public in a fun, creative way.

In summary, humorous activism can be more effective than angry outbursts and vocal demonstrations, as it literally draws in an audience and thereby builds the bridging social capital (see page 122) of the movement. Humour is inclusive, rather than confronting. Humorous actions assist the public to determine their own stance on a particular issue. As such, they expand a movement's social capital by temporarily demonstrating a visual spike in interest and support. This may result in the recruitment of long term supporters, either in kind, by association with the cause, via donations (time or physical resources), or by becoming active themselves. Consequently, the movement will be able to draw on an increased

volume of tangible and virtual resources, such as new affiliates' skills, knowledge and contacts. However, most importantly, it has ensured awareness and increased engagement with the subject.

Humour as educational tool

Once activists' have attracted an audience and interested them in their "performance", they need to demonstrate that they possess the necessary subject knowledge (i.e. cultural capital) to be taken seriously. Anti-nuclear activists deal with complex and technical subject matters, such as fusion, energy production and the technicalities of mining operations. Furthermore, the potential health and environmental impacts of, for example, a nuclear meltdown may alarm audiences, rather than draw them in. In this context, humour can be a valuable education tool, helping to communicate complicated and potentially worrying information in an entertaining but memorable way.

Despite the port city being a nuclear free zone, Fremantle has hosted the annual Australian Uranium Mining Conference since 2005. Anti-nuclear activists have traditionally met delegates on at least one morning of the two-day conference. However, rather than initiating angry protests and confrontations with mining representatives, the WA ANM's presence has evolved into a side show in its own right, with a wide range of speakers and entertainment interludes. These include representatives from affiliated organisations and groups, such as the union movement (for example, representatives from Unions WA and the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) have publicly taken a stance against uranium mining and nuclear energy at these events), political parties (e.g. the West Australian Labor Party and the Australian Greens), the City of Fremantle, health professionals (e.g. Medical Association for the Prevention of War) and Indigenous groups (e.g. WANFA) as well as sub-groups and initiatives, such as the Clown Army and the Raging Grannies.

Uranium conferences are usually promoted exclusively and directly to relevant organisations and potential delegates, rather than advertised publicly. The WA ANM intends to raise awareness of the gathering by attracting crowds of interested community members. Whilst initiatives like the Uranium Conference protest have community building characteristics (for example, the use of songs, drama and dance interludes attract audiences and thereby generate bridging cultural capital),

they also provide an opportunity to educate in song, dance and word. Thereby their function extends well beyond the protest itself, by demonstrating and further expanding cultural capital, both internally and externally of the WA ANM.

On 21st July 2010 anti-nuclear activists gathered, as every year, outside the Esplanade Hotel in Fremantle to educate the public about the nuclear cycle in song and comedy. The Esplanade Hotel is one of the largest venues in Perth and preferred conference location for the International Uranium Conference. It also inadvertently provides anti-nuclear activists with a number of unique advantages: gathering on the footpath at the street corner in front of the hotel, activists are in full view of passing cars and pedestrians. They are also on public land, which means the hotel's security staff cannot move them on. Furthermore, as the venue's driveway and access to the main entrance cuts across this particular corner, delegates are forced to walk past protesters on their way into the conference.



Illustration 6.3: Photos of the July 2010 Uranium Conference Protest (taken as participant observer)

Attempting to enter the venue to disrupt proceedings would send a very different message. However, during the years I attended as participant observer, anti-nuclear activists were comfortably engaging with conference delegates if approached, but largely kept to themselves and focused on their own, alternative program. The content of the protest, rather than individual actions, emphasised that the days of the uranium mining industry are numbered, as WA ANM activists have the 'truth' on their side, which they intend to share with the community. Subject specific knowledge and expertise, i.e. embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), are particularly crucial in this context to ensure activists are recognised as reliable, well-educated and, most importantly, credible sources of information. As Alycia explained:

No uranium mine has [ever] operated successfully. No uranium mine has operated without damaging the environment or costing taxpayers money. Just like no nuclear power station has ever opened without government subsidies. We've got the facts [...]. This industry has failed time and time again to operate safely or cheaply. (Alycia, interview, 28th February 2011)

Public protests like the 2010 gathering outside the Australian Uranium Conference provide activists with a forum to communicate and convey these truths, facts and information to a wider audience, as well as demonstrate to conference delegates that they possess subject specific expertise (cultural capital). Moreover, the event provides an opportunity to share knowledge and insights amongst activists, as a form of professional development. Humour performs a crucial role within this.

Beyond its ability to attract and alert an inquisitive audience in the first place, humour provides three benefits when used as an educational tool. Firstly, it lowers defences and thus makes people more receptive to new perspectives. Secondly, humour enables the communication of disturbing and frightening information in an engaging, tolerable way. Finally, it makes information memorable. The following paragraphs cover these three characteristics in more detail.

Firstly, humour effectively lowers an audience's defences and hence enables them to be more open to new perspectives (J. C. Meyer, 2000). Even if bystanders and activists do not share the same point of view, humour establishes a common ground, which allows further exploration or discussion by drawing on "shared values rather than dualistic opposites" (Branagan, 2007b, p.473). Conference delegates may represent the opposition in a battle against uranium mines, however, on a number of occasions conference delegates emerged from the venue and watched performances. Some took photos, and others approached individual speakers for brief discussions. Beyond the 2010 Uranium Conference protest, numerous incidences have been referred to by anti-nuclear activists and documented in first-hand accounts, during which representatives of the police force smiled, laughed and sometimes even joined in during humorous actions (e.g. Branagan, 2006; Bruner, 2005). As Jay recalled: "I've seen so many police officers trying not to laugh".

Branagan (2005), who in his work extensively reflects on his own activist experience with humour, emphasises its ability to encourage deep-seated emancipatory learning, which correlates with the WA ANM activists' perceptive:

I think that it gets people thinking. People aren't going to engage in something that they don't want to see, but if you can add a bit of satire [...] if we can give people a laugh you will get them thinking. [...] It's definitely not meant to downplay the seriousness of uranium mining or nuclear power [...] I think it's just more effective. (Jay, interview, 13th May 2012)

Anti-nuclear activists' mission is to educate the community about what are essentially alarming, if not terrifying, potential consequences associated with the nuclear circle. Radiation, nuclear warfare and health risks associated with uranium mining arguably may be more suitable themes for a Hollywood science fiction movie, than a community-friendly information event in central Fremantle. Activists are conscious of the potential risk of alarming, distressing and ultimately alienating their audiences. Disillusionment and despair are widely documented emotional states within the activism context (e.g. Barker, Martin, & Zournazi, 2008; Cox, 2009; Hoare, 1998; La Rocca, 2004; Macy, 1983; Moyer, McAllister, Finley, & Soifer, 2001). However, the nuclear industry appears to evoke strong emotions in its resisters, to the extent that some key organisers within the WA ANM admitted to deliberately avoiding involvement over a prolonged period. Alycia, a key organiser of the 2010 Uranium Conference protest, explained:

I'd kind of shied away from the anti-nuclear movement because it was kind of too scary....Everything about it was so big and scary and serious. Just the reality of what this industry has done over the years, it's really hard to digest and hard to deal with, and you know once you start, that's it, you're immersed in it. I'd been involved in other environmental campaigns and totally immersed in those issues, but they weren't as dark and weren't as scary and weren't as sad. I suppose this issue weighs a lot heavier on your heart. (Alycia, interview, 28th February 2011)

The quote illustrates how activists are very conscious of the long-term health and environmental impacts of uranium and its by-products. Exposure to radiation cannot be seen, smelled, tasted or heard, and hence may go unnoticed over long periods of time (Anti Nuclear Alliance of Australia (ANAWA), 2009a; Conservation Council of Western Australia, 2010c, 2010d). Nuclear radiation has the ability to change people's DNA code, leading to increases in cancer and genetic diseases (Busby, 2010; Zaire, Notter, Riedel, & Thiel, 1997), as has been documented in the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster (United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR), 2012). In Australia, traditional Aboriginal owners and the wider Maralinga community continue to feel the effects of a string of secret British nuclear tests during the 1950s (Simon & Bouville, 2002). Hence,

rather than alarm audiences by emphasising the potential risks and dangers of the nuclear industry, activists draw on humour, which has the ability to balance highly critical or disturbing information with “elements of light-heartedness, perspective and hope” (Branagan, 2007b, p.472), thus drawing attention to this important issue in a non-threatening way.

Verity explained their reasoning behind this within the context of the March 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster:

People don't quite understand what's happened at Fukushima¹⁹, but they also don't want to know [...] they want to be comforted. [...] Now is not the time to just douse people down with depressing facts, so I'm more interested in how we use humour. You advance your engagement with the issue to an “of course-ness”. If you poke fun at the nuclear priesthood, the true believers, the strange antics of the nuclear priesthood, they are bizarre. It is the most circular and crazy logic that we need lots and lots of weapons that can blow the world up so that we're protecting the world and making it more peaceful. It's like this is a crazy and psychotic circular argument and it's horrific... but it's also hilarious. Knowledge might be power, but you win an argument when one side's case appears laughable. Humour and hope are essential to overcome psychic [sic] numbing and motivate action. (Verity, interview, 28th April 2011)

Verity's comments illustrate the core function of ridicule as an educational tool in grassroots activism. By providing alternative information about uranium mining and nuclear energy, WA ANM activists educate audiences in a satirical and engaging way, simultaneously challenging existing perceptions and what they refer to as the “of courseness” of the nuclear industry's role in combatting global warming.

At the 2010 protest WA ANM activists made extensive use of humour as part of speeches, but also in dedicated, often one-off performances. In previous years, they included a show by the *Doomsday Quartet*, a group of activists dressed up in skeleton costumes and supported by a mushroom cloud inspired skit. In this instance, the program also included performances by the Raging Grannies, a group of spirited ladies who proudly defied stereotypes of elderly women as being pleasant, humble and non-confrontational.

¹⁹ On 11th March 2011 Japan was hit by a tsunami, which initiated a nuclear meltdown and release of radioactive material at the Fukushima Daiichi Plant. This has since been recognised as the largest nuclear disaster since Chernobyl in 1986. More than 160,000 people were dislocated and at the end of this study in 2013 Fukushima continued making headlines due to ongoing leaking of toxic water into the ocean.



Illustration 6.4: Raging Grannies at the 2010 Uranium Conference Protest, Lincoln Baker. PerthNow <http://www.perthnow.com.au/gallery-e6frg1vc-1225895039441?page=2>

Originating in Canada, the Raging Grannies concept has been embraced by activists in a range of Western countries and has been the focus of a wide range of studies (e.g. Acker & Brightwell, 2004; Roy, 2000; Sawchuk, 2009). Worldwide, the Raging Grannies are driven by an environmental and humanitarian agenda, with a strong focus on anti-nuclear activism. However, the Raging Grannies are not simply about having fun. Their actions are carefully prepared and researched, ensuring they provide audiences with an educational message or “take home” point that challenges the dominant belief system. Past campaigns have included knit-ins, the incorporation of rocking chairs into protests and even the launching of their own (canoe) navy (Sawchuk, 2009). In Western Australia, the Raging Granny concept has been embraced by a mixed group of long-term activists, who come together for performances at anti-nuclear protests and events. Despite some street theatre and drama influences, the WA Grannies predominantly embrace musical performances as an educational tool, via which they communicate their key criticism of nuclear proliferation, power and uranium mining. With their disarming smiles and modest demeanour, they are potentially easily underestimated. Their strength lies in their witty, satirical song lyrics, performed to popular music, through which they challenge the status quo. Known for their flamboyant skirts and outrageous hats, the grannies opted for matching aprons at this particular protest, thereby poking further fun at the stereotype of older women as being homely and largely disconnected from political processes.

Additional humorous and satirical performances at the 2010 Conference Protest included a skit depicting eminent Australian pro-nuclear advocate Dr Zygmunt “Ziggy” Switkowski as a mad professor, gambling away Australian citizen’s health

and future. Johnno, the top hat donning Ziggy character on the day, explained why he perceives humour as an educational powerful tool in anti-nuclear activism:

Novelty value partly, and I think you can say things in song that you couldn't possibly say in just straight talk, could you? I mean, so one of the other songs we've got was the doctors who give visitation, enjoy yourself, it's later than you think, because Doctor Ziggy's put us on the brink of nuclear annihilation as fast as you can blink. If you say that straight out, people would get really upset, wouldn't they? [...] when that's a sing-along [...] there are kids and people in the audience singing with you. (Johnno, interview, 5th April 2011)

These examples illustrate that humorous street theatre, songs and other creative performances are tools of political education, which are favoured within the anti-nuclear context and enable activists to openly challenge the scientific and economic discourses favoured by corporations and governments. In doing so, they animate audiences to evaluate their own position and knowledge, acquire new perspectives and information and engage with the nuclear debate. The familiarity of popular songs, the playfulness of actors and the colours of their costumes literally draw in the audience. Importantly, by embedding serious, often confronting, messages within well-known lyrics, satirical poems and playful performances, activists are able to retain audiences and communicate key messages within an enjoyable and entertaining context. The memorable nature of these fun activities ensures the "stickiness" of the message well beyond the actual performance.

Indisputably, cultural capital is crucial within the WA ANM context, as activists need to demonstrate to corporate representatives, politicians and community members that they are sufficiently informed and qualified to comment on nuclear issues. WA ANM activists predominantly draw on 'embodied cultural capital'; that is, knowledge and expertise that has been consciously acquired over time out of an inherent passion for the cause. However, individual speakers, such as representatives from political parties, academics, spokespeople from Indigenous groups and health professionals from the Medical Association for the Prevention of War at the 2010 Uranium Conference also add "institutionalised cultural capital". Ultimately, the credentials and expertise of activists and affiliates add to the social capital of the movement as a whole and hence its ability to challenge the status quo. The resulting credibility from this accumulation of social capital may also aid the movement in securing economic resources (Portes, 2000), such as donations, which were the main funding source for paid positions within the WA ANM.

However, as crucial as subject-specific expertise may be, the complex and highly technical nature of nuclear and mining processes may overwhelm and repel audiences. Verity explains:

We're caught by the enemy in terms of having to be really precise and people also being quite bamboozled and intimidated by the information. You don't have to know everything about a nuclear reactor to know that it sucks. But people feel like they need to know a lot more and that it's so complex and confusing and it turns them off. (Verity, interview 28th April 2011)

WA ANM activists draw on extensive, largely self-taught and acquired cultural capital relating to the complex processes involved with the mining or uranium, the use of nuclear weapons, and the powering of nuclear stations. Arguably, much of this technical and convoluted information would be lost on passing audiences. The "science, human biology type language [...] doesn't communicate well with lots of people" (Alice, interview 6th June 2011). Hence humour has been recognised as particularly relevant when aiming to communicate weighty and complex topics, making them suddenly accessible and memorable (Branagan, 2007a), thus offering educative value. WA ANM activists possess an extensive "tool kit" of actions and material that they can draw on, enabling them to communicate their key messages via speeches, letters to the editor or handouts. However, due to their memorable characteristics, humorous actions – such as for example songs, skits or cartoons – are perceived as more effective by WA ANM activists, because they enter the audience's psyche at a deeper level. Hence, they are more easily absorbed (Branagan, 2007a). Encapsulating views into memorable phrases and short anecdotes promotes a greater level of recall (J. C. Meyer, 2000) and assists in highlighting salient points or highlighting adverse conditions (Hart & Bos, 2007). For example, the Raging Granny performances are not only effective and memorable because they draw on melodies audiences are already familiar with. The context, the embedded irony of "not so sweet retirees" performing at an anti-nuclear rally and the use of sarcasm and black humour, also make it arguably easy for audiences to recall their act as well as key messages.

For example, the proposal of a nuclear waste disposal site in the Australian outback re-emerged during the course of this study. There is no need for audience members to know about logistics, soil samples and detailed health implications in order to become interested and engaged. Instead, street performances communicate core messages and the essence of the WA ANM's arguments. By exaggerating and

ridiculing the pro-nuclear lobby's claims, activists effectively turn the corporate sales pitch for the project into a farce; a comedy so exaggerated that audiences are left asking themselves "they can't possibly be serious about this?" They may laugh at the actors, shake their heads at the preposterous nature of the proposal and leave motivated to find out more about it. However, most significantly, through the audience's engagement a business proposal for a remote location in the Australian outback is essentially repositioned as a health hazard in "our backyard" that concerns everyone. In Verity's words: "If you've made a joke and you've connected with someone...you've made a thousand arguments. You don't need to bore the hell out of them" (Verity, interview 28th April 2011).

In summary, humour is a crucial educational tool within the WA ANM context that allows activists to share and increase their cultural capital. By ridiculing the uranium lobby and undertaking amusing activities, activists literally draw in their audiences (evidenced by a growing number of bystanders and participants) and re-enforce key information in a non-threatening way. One of the key characteristics of humorous actions is that they lower the defences and result in people being more open to new ideas and concepts. Anti-nuclear activists are guardians of highly disturbing information. However, rather than repel audiences with doomsday scenarios and fear mongering, they draw on humorous actions which allow them to balance highly critical and disturbing messages with fun and entertainment. But most importantly, they employ humour because it lends itself to communicating complex information in an accessible and memorable way.

Carnavalesque activism: inspiring or a counterproductive strategy?

As illustrated in the examples throughout this chapter, the WA ANM embraces the concept of carnivalesque activism. Despite limited sophistication in the use of identity-shielding costumes at some WA ANM actions, masquerades and character dresses continue to play a crucial role within the movement and add to the overall entertainment feature of their public actions. Two of the more evolved examples are discussed towards the end of this chapter: the Clown Army and the Mad Hatter Tea Party float in the Fremantle Carnival. Carnavalesque activism highlights a sense of community and the absence of hierarchies (Bakhtin, 1984), as common amongst anti-nuclear activists. In modern Western cultures the use of comedy and street theatre as communications tools is largely limited to activists. In the example of the Uranium Conference protest, even representatives from affiliate groups, such as the union movement and mainstream parties, appeared somewhat amused but slightly

uneasy about the carnivalesque atmosphere. Moreover, WA ANM activists' emphasis on humorous activities represents a strong contrast to the demeanour of the mining corporations whose activities and authority they challenge. In fact, activists utilise the dichotomy between corporations' hierarchical structure and seriousness and their own unruly collective and emphasis on fun, as a source of humour in itself, which is the basis of ridicule and satire in public performances.

Contrary to Rabelais's world in 16th century France (Bakhtin, 1984), today's Western corporations do not encourage the temporary suspension of hierarchies to avoid internal revolts and safeguard their position of power. Instead, they employ humour exclusively for neoliberal purposes. For example, jokes, dress ups, fun activities and even visits from the Clown Doctor may be acceptable as part of staff development days, with the aim of increasing the productivity of a particular business unit or group. However, comedy and ridicule are considered inappropriate and unprofessional within a daily business context. Hence, whilst humour is an important educational strategy for the WA ANM, it arguably undermines activists' credibility from a corporate perspective. Corporate representatives, such as uranium conference delegates, may be inclined to watch the WA ANM's performances. However, the photos they take and recollections they share with their colleagues may further add to corporations underestimating, possibly even dismissing, the strategic capabilities and social capital of anti-nuclear activists.

In summary, despite the emphasis in PR activist literature on corporation-activist engagement and the creation of a win-win zone as best practice, WA ANM activists attribute only very limited value to the direct interaction with corporate representatives. Whilst individual activists are respectful and approachable when communicating with mining delegates or corporate communications staff, corporations are not one of their key target audiences. This is particularly relevant in the context of humorous actions, such as the Uranium Conference Protest. Anti-nuclear activists may aim to demonstrate to delegates that they are keeping a careful eye on the mining industry and will continue to undermine their plans for uranium mines; however, their key audience is the local community, including already engaged citizens and fellow WA ANM activists. Hence, from the WA ANM perspective, it is perceived to be irrelevant if conference delegates and corporate representatives underestimate or even dismiss their cultural capital, strategic abilities and symbolic power. Beyond its community building and educational capabilities, humour performs two further functions that are integral to the long-term survival and success of the movement. These are the sustainability of activism and

the development of a collective WA ANM identity, which are discussed in more detail in the second half of this chapter.

Humour as a sustainability tool

Humour has historically been “an essential ingredient” (Joy, email conversation, 10th May 2011) of WA-based anti-nuclear action, as documented in activist publications such as Kearn’s (2004) *Stepping out for Peace*, a history of the WA ANM based on interviews with key anti-nuclear activists. Much of the WA ANM’s humour originates out of the inherent adversity, even absurdity and potential hopelessness, of the situation activists find themselves in; i.e. a collective of poorly resourced, volunteer-reliant individuals is attempting to prevent multi-billion dollar, international mining companies with full Federal and State government support from ultimately generating more wealth for their shareholders, at a time when in West Australia, the operation of mining companies is largely perceived as crucial to the country’s economy. As anti-nuclear activists boldly position themselves as the counter-voice and challengers of the status quo, humour arises naturally.



Illustration 6.5: Roadside protesters at Breakfast at Barnett’s on 11th March 2011

The enormity of the challenge activists face may eventually lead to resentment, frustration, anger and other emotions that undermine and erode activists’ abilities and long-term success. As discussed earlier, despair, disillusionment and burnout are well documented in activist and social movement literature and widely

acknowledged by activists, as is illustrated on page 165. Activists acknowledge that emotions surface and fluctuate within the anti-nuclear context, as they struggle on a personal level with the severity of the potential health and environmental effects of the nuclear cycle:

The despair that people often feel when you face up to this issue is kind of profound and devastating and if you don't provide hope and humour you will just drown in the horror of it. It's overwhelming and terrifying. (Verity, interview, 28th April 2011)

As discussed earlier, humour can balance highly critical, disturbing messages with light-heartedness, an alternative perspective and hope. As such it brings "balance, inspiration, and sustainability to activism" (Branagan, 2007a, p.51), as well as to individual movements (Flesher Fominaya, 2007). Parkhill, et al. (2011) illustrate the power and potential of humour in their UK case study of people who live in close proximity to nuclear power plants. They found that humour provides a means to vocalise emotions and concerns that usually would be difficult to express. One particular type of humour that is utilised in this context is "gallows humour", which has historically been employed to strengthen morale and the spirit of resistance during life and identity threatening experiences (Obrdlik, 1942). Similarly, black humour and wit may mask activists feeling emotionally and physically overwhelmed, and arguably act as a coping mechanism, as has been frequently implied in informal conversations with WA ANM on the fringes of public actions.

Drawing on his own experience as an activist, Branagan (2007b) emphasises that whilst strong feelings like anger may be a common and even important emotions in activism, they are not sustainable. In the long term they may force activists to take a break from activist activities, or even to withdraw their (active) support permanently. Activists, in contrast to corporate communication professionals, invest their own time and energy outside work, study and family commitments. Consequently, they are arguably more vulnerable to exhaustion, stress and breakdowns/ health scares, particularly when considering the level of their personal, emotional investment in the anti-nuclear issue. Alice explained the underlying frustration anti-nuclear activists experience, including the constant risk of "burning out", as "it's hard when people are really passionate but don't have anything [left], any time to give" (interview, 6th June 2011).

The risk of 'activism fatigue' and burnout emphasises the crucial role humour can play, as in contrast to anger it allows activists to release emotions, such as rage and

frustration, while simultaneously providing positive and enjoyable experiences for their audiences (Branagan, 2007b). In his reflection on humour in activism, Branagan further promotes the health benefits of humorous activism, such as muscle relaxation, cardiac exercise, and reduced stress and blood pressure levels. Furthermore, humour has the potential to defuse tensions, resolve conflict and integrate marginal group members (Flesher Fominaya, 2007), thereby ensuring the long-term viability of the movement.

Humour is particularly valuable for the sustainability of individual activists. Through the creation of rewarding, relaxing, empowering and re-energising experiences, activists gain new perspective and hope. Hence, they avoid burnout and the need to take prolonged breaks away from the movement. Humorous actions may also act as a reward in themselves, by creating positive experiences to compensate for the time, energy and personal resources that have been invested in the movement, hence balancing out negative emotions and incidences. For example, as illustrated earlier in the chapter, personal preferences and interests dominated the concept of the Nuclear Spill action in Cottesloe. Equally, individuals' interests and needs frequently appeared to drive the program of the Uranium Conference protests. A passion for street theatre and personal irritation about the pro-nuclear campaigner Ziggy Switkovsky's comments at a forum earlier in the year motivated Johnno to write a play in which he ridiculed both the scientist's identity and public pro-nuclear statements. A love for catchy tunes and old classics motivated the Grannies to expand their repertoire of anti-nuclear songs. Likewise, the need to provide a physical balance to office work and an interest in popular music inspired a dance performance to US singer Britney Spears' 'Toxic':

Having fun, for me it's even more important because I spend my days working and studying in something quite serious: policy and politics. And then sometimes I just want to wear a funny outfit and do something fun. But that still is in the vein of what I have been doing [campaigning against uranium mining]...It's more about me. It's self-indulgent, yes. And I think it helps to get the message to some people, but maybe for other people it waters the message down. I don't know. ...If I want to do that and it fits with me... (Alice, interview, 6th June 2011)

Much of this is driven by activists' commitment not to take themselves too seriously, not being afraid of being different and an ability to laugh at themselves, thereby releasing energy and tension:

I want to always remember that we are tiny insignificant human beings and nothing really matters at all times. And that means that while I'm doing those things, I want to have fun too because there's no point in just being all really serious about it all the time. (Alice, interview, 6th June 2011)

Hence, the 'fun factor' of individual actions and benefits to individual activists appears to regularly override, or at least overshadow, strategic communication decisions concerning audiences' needs and preferences. In the planning sessions I participated in, corporate audiences and their communication styles were not considered. Arguably, this may be due to the dual role humour fulfils: on one hand, it attracts community members and aids in the conveying of complex messages. On the other hand, it is crucial to ensure the long-term survival of the movement itself, by acting both as a creative outlet and as a re-energising means.

One of those examples is "Breakfast at Barnett's", a weekly humorous protest outside the State Premier's electoral office throughout the 100 weeks leading to the State elections in March 2013. What started off as a fun idea emerging out of the BUMP Collective in early 2011 gained momentum and creative sophistication. A 100 week protest is likely to be a large challenge for a volunteer-reliant movement like the WA ANM. However, with support from affiliated groups and related causes, activists maintained their weekly pre-work presence alongside one of the busiest highways, running from the coast to Perth's Central Business District (CBD). Humour played a central role in Breakfast at Barnett's, with continuously changing weekly themes designed not primarily with audiences in mind, but to attract individual activists. The idea was that activists would bring their own breakfast and hot drink, which they consumed whilst engaging with passing commuters on their way to work. One of the focal points was a giant papier-mâché head, depicting the Premier. Trying to provide the head-wearing volunteer with breakfast and hot drinks was a source of amusement in itself. Breakfasts also included protective suits, radioactive drums, creative banners and a roadside tea party. Although masks, suits and radioactive symbols may signify danger, alarm and potential confrontation to passing motorists, WA ANM activists approached the weekly gathering as a fun get together with an opportunity for dress ups, creative expression and pre-work laughs. Without humour at its core, this long-term initiative would not be sustainable, as personal involvement and motivation would likely suffer.



Illustration 6.6: Roadside protesters holding a Radioactive Tea Party at Breakfast at Barnett's on 18th

Noticeably, the Premier consistently ignored the weekly spectacle and ever-changing crowd of activists. Equally, media coverage of the Breakfast was minimal, limited to a single news story in the local community paper at the beginning of the 100 week initiative (The Post, 2011). From a corporate PR perspective, this would therefore not be an effective, strategic use of already limited resources. However, the WA ANM did not actively seek out media attention, or engagement with the Premier's office. Instead, the focus was on creative expression, community engagement and most importantly the sustainability of individual activists. I argue that engagement with passing commuters, although limited due to the steady flow of traffic, is crucial to individuals' long-term involvement and commitment. Laughing, waving and beeping drivers provide activists with new energy and the much needed confirmation that their voice is being heard.

Hart (2007) emphasises that although "humour in itself never changes circumstances" (p. 7), it may be employed as a coping strategy. Humour itself does not change the WA ANM's lack of resources, the imminent approval of mining projects and enormity of the challenges that lie ahead of activists in the lead up to the next State election. However, humour is crucial to ensure the sustainability of individual activists and the long-term survival of the WA ANM, as Rachel explained:

I definitely think humour is important for mental health and well-being and if it can be fun and not heavy and if it yes, draws away from the fact that maybe action won't make a difference or it will be lost or whatever. But at least the individual got something out of it and whether it was a social interaction or whether it was to laugh, [it] is very important to keep people strong and stop them panning out. (Rachel, 20th May 2011)

The WA ANM faces a constant balancing act between educating and attracting new supporters and keeping the existing movement going. Humour has the potential to do both, although in the majority of cases observed during this study personal preferences and the perceived need for re-energising “naughty actions” took priority over community engagement.

In summary, activists' need for re-energising and having fun may at times have overridden community and audience preferences. From a corporate perspective, this communicator-centred approach undermines and limits the WA ANM's strategic capabilities. However, movements do not have the benefit of paid staff, resources, professional development opportunities and extensively planned communication strategies. Instead, their long term survival and success relies on the mental health and wellbeing of individual activists and their ability to contribute skills, expertise and personal resources. Humour enables activists to overcome adversity, challenges and negative feelings and emotions, whilst providing them with a creative outlet.

However, beyond re-energising and sustaining individual activists, initiatives like Breakfast at Barnett's and other public displays of solidarity are equally crucial for their bonding (social) capital, hence their ability to strengthen the individual activist identity, and the collective identity of the WA ANM, as examined in the final section of this chapter.

The role of humour in creating a collective identity

Humour and laughter have traditionally served as powerful tools in social protest, by constructing a strong sense of unity (Hart, 2007). This is clearly illustrated in Kearn's (2004) historic account of the WA ANM that depicts a wide range of humorous campaign examples and initiatives, as well as other forms of creative expression, which have shaped and strengthened the identity of the movement over time. The

enjoyable, invigorating and often healing experience of humorous activism enable the development of a strong bond within the group or movement, and even beyond, by drawing on common experiences across affinity groups (Branagan, 2007a). A WA ANM related example of an affinity group is the Conservation Council, Western Australia's peak environmental body, which despite its overall more conservative positioning has a number of employees involved in the BUMP campaign. The network further extends to Indigenous groups, such as the Australian (ANFA) and the West Australian Nuclear Free Alliance (WANFA), as well as at times to the WA based Deaths in Custody committee. Representatives from these groups come together on an ad hoc basis to support various campaigns and initiatives. In the case of 'Breakfast at Barnett's', affinity groups stretched even further, with, for example, Save the Marine Life and Save the Kimberley activists being amongst those responsible for a particular week's protest and theme, attracted by both the concept and the opportunity to express themselves in a humorous way. These examples illustrate that humorous initiatives allow activists to create what Putnam (1998, 2000) and Gittel and Vidal (1998) refer to as "bridging social capital". They simultaneously reinforce shared values, beliefs and a commonly shared identity across affiliated groups, based on a preference for creativity, non-violent direct action and civil disobedience.

Humour is particularly effective in creating intra-group or intra-movement "bonding social capital". Bonding social capital is what Putnam (2000) refers to as the sociological 'super glue' of society. It brings people who already know each other even closer together (Putnam, 1998). Humour actively shapes and strengthens the WA ANM's collective identity through "mutual identification and clarification of positions and values" (J. C. Meyer, 2000, p.310). As such, a relatively short-term experience, such as participation in a 'Breakfast at Barnett's' or in the Nuclear Spill Action, can have a long-term, binding effect, resulting in feelings of affection, solidarity and loyalty amongst activists (Hart & Bos, 2007). This closeness and shared experience develops trust, cooperation and reciprocity (Kagan, Lawthom, Knowles, & Burton, 2000), which ultimately help movements to get by on a daily basis (Putnam, 2002) as well as survive in the long term. Writing about radical activist tactics, Derville (2005) concludes that "Militant acts fulfil the organizational goal of building identity, which is more important than paltry social sphere results" (p. 530). The same can be concluded about the role of humour, which plays multiple roles within the WA ANM. Externally, it is an educational tool, designed to draw in audiences. However, internally, humour fulfils a crucial role, independent of

traditional PR objectives, campaign goals and community support, by creating and strengthening the collective identity and thereby ensuring the survival of the movement over time.

Another example within the context of the WA ANM is the Stop the Nuclear Madness Radioactive Tea Party, a themed float that participated in the 2010 Fremantle Street Carnival. Although weeks of planning and a number of evening



Illustration 6.7: Mad Hatter Float at the Fremantle Carnival, 14th November 2010

workshops went into the building and decoration of the float, the actual parade through the city took less than an hour. However, the carnival experience, intensified via the humorous interaction with fellow activists and curious community members along the way, had a long-lasting and binding effect. Although the float had community building and educational features, as well as aiding individual activists in re-charging their own energy and motivational levels, its major contribution to the WA ANM was arguably the shaping and strengthening of the movement's collective identity.

Fremantle is known for its alternative scene and left-leaning political preferences. At the time of the 2010 Carnival, both Fremantle's Mayor and its local Member of Parliament to the West Australian Legislative Assembly had been elected based on their Green platform²⁰. The port city is also a nuclear free zone. Thus despite the multi-issue focus of the community carnival, WA ANM activists had the benefit of an already attentive, interested and broadly supportive audience. Illustrating the dichotomy between the dangers associated with the nuclear industry and the environmentally conscious audience, anti-nuclear activists chose a Mad Hatter / Alice in Wonderland theme to emphasise the irrationality and short sightedness (i.e. madness) they associated with uranium mining and nuclear energy. Fitted out as a

²⁰ Fremantle's first Greens MP, Adele Carles, resigned from the Party earlier in the year to sit as an independent.

mobile tearoom, complete with green, slimy (toxic) tea, dry ice and Alice in Wonderland characters, the float's sophistication and attention to detail attracted many smiles and laughs along the way. The hundreds of spectators that lined the streets of Fremantle were drawn closer to the float via music, the invitation to share some yellow(cup)cake²¹ and via the Nuclear Madness scene on the float itself, which invited discussion and numerous photo opportunities. WA ANM used the Alice in Wonderland characters to communicate key messages about the danger (or madness) of uranium mining and nuclear energy. Rather than confront the audience with doomsday scenarios or the threat of a nuclear meltdown, activists chose to educate and involve the local community in a fun and memorable way. Accompanying activists in protective suits handed out flyers with further information. The strongest and most memorable messages were, however, communicated via the characters and the Nuclear Madness scene, implying that the nuclear industry is in a frantic race against time, short-sighted by putting profits ahead of the environment, illogical by wasting already scarce water resources, and acting foolishly by exposing the community to potential risks.

The playfulness of the characters and the embedded comedy in the float scene evoked many laughs from bystanders and re-energised participating activists. Based on the continuing references to and discussions about the Nuclear Madness Float amongst WA ANM activists, I argue that not the community but activists themselves were a key audience and the main benefactor of this initiative. For example, over six months after the carnival, at least four of the central activists in the parade continued to use a close up photo of their character as their profile picture on the social media site Facebook. Via these images they proudly identified themselves, in front of friends and acquaintances, as participants in the Nuclear Madness Float and active supporters of the WA ANM. The involvement in the tea party did not only reinforce individual activists' identities; most importantly it aided in further refining and strengthening the WA ANM's values and collective identity.

²¹ Yellowcake is a type of uranium concentrate powder and the form in which uranium ore is transported

In her case study of anti-capitalist activism in Madrid, Flesher Fominaya (2007) highlights the crucial role humour plays in terms of building and sustaining the movement over time, particularly for resource poor, autonomous movements. By nature, movements like the WA ANM are heterogeneous groups, bringing together people of various backgrounds, experiences and social classes. Flesher Fominaya argues that in the absence of a common 'product'-based identity or shared ideology, humour "can serve as a crucial resource in the process of collective identity formation" (Flesher Fominaya, 2007, p. 257). The resulting bond shapes and strengthens the WA ANM's social capital, by ensuring continued access to a well-connected, extensive network of supporters and their skills, knowledge and resources. Networks and contacts are a key characteristic of public relations. However, access to extensive networks is even more crucial for activists. Due to the WA ANM's lack of resources and in particular economic capital, the backing of the "collectively-owned capital" (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 51) of its acquaintances and supporters becomes even more significant. Humorous initiatives like the Nuclear Madness Float ensure that this capital remains available for as long as it is needed.



Illustration 6.8: Alice-character on top of the Mad Hatter Float at the Fremantle Carnival, 14th November 2010 (Uraniumfree WA, 2011a)

Hart (2007) cautions that a collective identity is not created from scratch, however engaging or impactful the humorous action may be. She argues that in order to be effective, a pre-existing collective identity needs to exist before humour can be utilised in social protest. The WA ANM is guided by an historic grounding in the peace and environmental movements, which shape its decision making and communication styles. Humour has a dual function, both as a unifier and a divider (J. C. Meyer, 2000). By differentiating between acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, styles or people, the group distinguishes itself from others (us vs. them) and hence becomes even closer and more focused (Hart & Bos, 2007). As discussed earlier, WA ANM activists utilise the dichotomy between corporations' hierarchical structure and seriousness and their own unruly collective and emphasis on fun as a source of

humour in itself. By positioning themselves in contrast or even opposition to mining corporations, activists further strengthen their own identity and characteristics. The Nuclear Madness, also referred to as Radioactive Tea Party Float experience helped clarify and reinforce the WA ANM's positions and values, such as its long standing commitment to non-violence and collective decision making, both of which differentiate its communication style from other forms of activism and the governments or corporations whose perspective they are challenging. This emphasis on flat structures and dispersed authority lends itself particularly to humour, not only as a strong contrast to the hierarchies and centralised decision making of the corporate sector, but also enables individual activists to express themselves in whichever way they feel comfortable or able to (handing out flyers, hurling yellow(cup)cakes at keen bystanders, engaging in conversations, acting out a character, etc.). Most importantly, humorous actions like the float emphasise the movement's dedication to non-violent direct action (NVDA) and civil disobedience as a focal campaign tool. They enable activists to relax, laugh together and thereby create an inclusive sense of community and collectively shared identity. A relatively short, humorous, shared experience therefore provides activists with a sense of belonging and direction, as well as conversation material and shared referencing points for months to come. It is important to note that this shared identity applies to WA ANM activists, but not necessarily to affiliates, such as unions, and associated not-for-profit organisations, which may provide support during a specific campaign or action, but otherwise prescribe to different communication tools and strategies. This distinction further differentiates the WA ANM and reinforces its unique identity. The concept of identity is explored in more detail in Chapter 7.

In summary, humour plays an important role for resource-poor, autonomous movements like the WA ANM, in bringing together people of various backgrounds, experiences and social classes under a shared, collective identity. It reinforces belief systems and communication styles, such as a commitment to non-violent direct action and collective decision making, and the crucial role of civil disobedience and “naughty” or “cheeky”, fun actions that clearly differentiate the WA ANM from governments, corporations and even other activist groups. This shared, collective identity and understanding ensures the day-to-day survival and long-term sustainability of the movement. Humorous actions enable the building and strengthening of inter group and intra movement bonding capital, which reinforces feelings of affection, solidarity and loyalty amongst activists, who may have previously known each other only on a more superficial level. As a result, the

movement's collectively owned capital increases, hence its power to influence the status quo.

Case study: The Clown Army

A further example of a highly successful, humorous collective identity building initiative within the WA ANM is the Clown Army, which is discussed in the final section of this chapter as an embedded case study, illustrating how humour plays a number of important roles for the WA ANM.



Illustration 6.9: The Clown Army (Fremantle Anti Nuclear Group (FANG), 2010a)

The clown-army concept, strongly influenced by carnivalesque action, is utilised globally. Commonly associated with left wing issues, such as injustice, corporate greed and war efforts, its actions aim to bring attention to selected community concerns in a humorous way. One major benefit of the clown character is that it is widely recognised and its language understood across cultures and different sections of society. Clowns have been involved in nuclear protests in France (Craig, 2011), Germany (indigo0020, 2010), Japan (C. Kim, 2011), Poland (Rekawek, 2012), North America (tincanluminary, 2011), Australia (Robson, 2011) and beyond. Scholarly research on the Clown Army has been largely based on participant

observation and to date predominantly focused on the UK-based Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (CIRCA) and their actions during the 2005 G8 Summit in Scotland (Klepto, 2004; Klepto & UpEvil, 2005; K. S. Mitchell, Kuffinec, & Brod, 2009; Reitan, 2007; Routledge, 2009, 2011)

In Western Australia, the Clown Army emerged out of the Fremantle Anti Nuclear Group (FANG), and attracted a cross section of predominantly younger activists from across the WA ANM. The initiative was introduced and driven by two anti-nuclear activists who adopted the idea following their international travels, during which they came in contact with a number of related activists groups and participated in their actions. At the time of the main part of the data collection for this study, the Clown Army was no longer active, due to changes in circumstances for the key organisers. However, numerous efforts were underway to revive “the clowns”. They had made a lasting impression on the activist community and were frequently referred to in formal interviews as well as in informal conversations, both by active participants and spectators. Jay, one of the key drivers behind the revival of the clowns, explained their significance:

We are angry and we do want to change this issue [uranium mining, support for nuclear energy], but we know that going about it in an aggressive or a violent way is not a good way to go about it. It doesn't work. (Jay, interview, 13th May 2011)

Jay's comments imply that WA ANM activist are conscious that anger, aggression and violent outburst would have a negative effect, both on audiences, as well as activists wellbeing. Instead, the Clown Army allows anti-nuclear activist to communicate important messages in a fun, all inclusive and invigorating way, as is illustrated and explained in the previous section of this chapter.

There is a clown in all of us: attracting audiences

The global familiarity with the clown character enables its success. Clowns are a common feature in circuses, but have also been used in holistic healing and corporate training sessions, which recognise the power of laughter within the recovery and team building process respectively. They are deeply embedded in the cultural fabric of most societies. Colonel Klepto and Major UpEvil, two key participants in the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army in the United Kingdom, explain that by not being real nor entirely fictional, clowns inhabit a unique in-between space, which allows them to be at the centre and the margins of society

simultaneously (Klepto & UpEvil, 2005). They may be chaotic and sometimes confronting, but they are known to be entertaining and harmless. This level of familiarity and reassurance of goodwill enables audiences to relate to the clown character and to be drawn to its performance. Thereby, the Clown Army [or in this case, the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army] helps bystanders to rediscover an “inner playful like state of generosity and spontaneity” (Klepto & UpEvil, 2005, p. 245), embedded in their acts of civil disobedience.

However, most importantly, like the court jester (Hart & Bos, 2007) (see page 154), the clown character has traditionally enjoyed the “liberty to confront all the taboos and truths of a culture, to critique the very core principles of society and yet get away with it” (Klepto & UpEvil, 2005, p. 248). There are numerous references in activism literature that refer to police officials struggling not to laugh or being tempted to join in clown-led humorous actions (e.g. Branagan, 2007b; Klepto & UpEvil, 2005). The same has been observed as part of this study, as detailed earlier in this chapter (page 164). Initiatives like the Clown Army do not only make it easier for activists to get into character and remove “the self from the issue” (Jay, interview, 13th May 2011); they are also disarming:

It’s harder to deal with a character than it is to deal with an angry activist. You can bait an angry activist, but you can’t really bait a clown who is begging to be baited.

And

The times when we did bring out the clowns we found the police were actually quite friendly towards us. They were trying not to laugh, so I think they gave us a little bit more leeway. (Jay, interview, 13th May 2011)

An additional benefit of the clowning experience is that it lowers the audience’s defences:

It works and even if people totally disagree morally or ethically with what’s being done, they might still come and see the show. (Jay, interview, 13th May 2011)

Jay’s reflection on her personal clowning experience and its impact on audiences illustrates the power of humorous actions like clowning in attracting a curious audience of community members, who may otherwise not have chosen to engage with the anti-nuclear subject matter.

The clown as educator

Beyond being an audience magnet, clowns have the ability to communicate powerful and memorable messages by highlighting, or even exaggerating, embedded ironies and paradoxes in business practices, military actions, or governmental actions. This underlying oxymoron is illustrated in the Clown Army concept. Clowns are known for being fun loving, a little chaotic and easily distracted. These contrast with the characteristics of the stereotypical soldier and traditional notions of the executive, who are expected to be serious, focused and follow instructions. By merging both the clown character with the soldier concept, humour naturally arises and makes embedded messages memorable. One of those examples is the Clown Army's involvement in the 2009 Fremantle Carnival. Under the theme "Only clowns waste water", WA ANM activists set out to highlight:

The ridiculous amount of water used in U mining. We ran around spraying each other with super soakers and being right clowns. People got involved, had a laugh and got the message. (Jay, interview, 13th May 2011)

The action was fun to watch and participate in. However, beyond the comicality of the clowns' actions on the day, their performance highlighted the absurdity of water wastage and the high reliance by uranium mining operations on water in one of the driest countries on earth in a memorable way. The water squander message appeared to resonate well with the West Australian audience, due to the water restrictions that are usually in place for the metropolitan area during that time of the year.

In his analysis of the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army's actions during the 2005 G8 Summit, Curran (2006) concludes that the clowns' non-violent protest was overshadowed by the media's focus on violent actions, which received an over-proportionate amount of attention. Similarly, in Western Australia the Clown Army has not been successful as a media strategy, or even photo opportunity, in its own right. The clowns' actions failed to penetrate mainstream media, but did feature in independent, left-leaning publications as well as in the local community paper:

Along with an anti-nuclear sing-along, a highlight of the action was a surprise visit from the Clown Army who searched the venue for radioactive waste. They managed to "uncover" Peter Garrett [then Federal Environment Minister and former anti-nuclear activist] hiding in the crowd. (Salmon, 2009, writing for online publication GreenLeft)

Moreover, the term 'clown' may have derogatory connotations within a business or even colloquial context, which has been reflected in comments left in response to online news stories on popular West Australian sites, such as thewest.com, perthnow.com and watoday.com.au. For example:

Run around (sic) and act the clown as much as you want but the protesters (sic) all use transport, electricity and wear clothing made from petroleum products so whos (sic) kidding who. (John K of Perth, Comment 10 of 44 on thewest.com.au AAP, 2010d)

Clowning as sustainability strategy

The Clown Army experience made a strong impression on WA ANM activists who perceived the initiative as a creative way to express their opinions and share their views on the nuclear cycle. The costume and assumed character worn by individuals provided them with a certain level of anonymity. It thus provided an outlet that enabled them to leave their usual inhibitions behind. Jay referred to a shy member of the Fremantle group, who eventually became relaxed and very outgoing during Clown Army rehearsals and even started to take the lead when wearing her costume during public actions. However, most importantly, the clowning experience provided a respite from day-to-day responsibilities and conventional activist activities, such as planning meetings, letter drops or demonstrations. The Clown Army represented a fun initiative activists wanted to be part of and genuinely looked forward to participating in:

It wasn't just a meeting. It was games. It was fun, it was playing. It was being young and being creative and being effective and it worked really well. (Jay, interview, 13th May 2011)

Jay appeared to refer to "being young" more as a state of mind, as opposed to years of age, as the age of WA ANM clowns ranged from late teens to retirement age. The relaxed and fun atmosphere provided activists with an outlet to release tension and leave daily concerns behind, whilst expressing themselves in their unique, creative way.

The Clown Army again was definitely the best activist project I've ever been involved in simply because it was so much fun for everyone. It was fun for the people who were teaching us, it was fun for the activists and it was also fun for the audience and it was creative and we got to find that a lot of activists are really incredibly creative people and if you put that to your use, to your cause, you can have a lot of fun and

be really effective and probably a lot more effective than just another rally would be. I think that people are [...] going to be more attracted to things that look fun than things that look confronting or dangerous. (Jay, interview, 13th May 2011)

The Clown Army and resulting clown actions enabled anti-nuclear activists to refuel their energy levels in a fun and enjoyable way, and provided a clear break from day-to-day responsibilities, study and work commitments. It thereby helped to avoid long-term, negative effects of activism such as burnout (exhaustion) and ensured the sustainability of activism, on an individual level and consequently for the WA ANM as a whole.

Towards a collective (clowning) identity

As a group activity the WA ANM Clown Army revitalised individual activists' motivation and commitment. It aided in strengthening the collective identity of the movement, or at least segments of the movement that participated in clowning activities, by emphasising its commitment to collective decision making, fun, non-violent actions and civil disobedience. Indeed, Klepto and UpEvil (2005) claim that the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army was deliberately introduced by UK activists in 2003 to counteract inner-group tensions, such as mistrust and conflict, which have traditionally disrupted and eventually destroyed many movements. As activists are highly passionate about a particular issue and personally emotionally invested, group tensions can play directly into the hands of the police and corporations, who frequently apply "divide and conquer" strategies to cripple activist resistance (Klepto, 2004). The Clown Army enabled the creation of "participatory spaces of action, which are inclusive and anti-hierarchical" (Routledge, 2009, p. 388).

We've got people from all kinds of walks of life. We had people who were probably quite closed and shy, introverted kinds of people, but we definitely had more extroverted kind of people who are willing to get out there and just make a clown of themselves really. (Jay, interview, 13th May 2011)

The concept particularly suits movements like the WA ANM, as the characters and workings of the Clown Army are fluid and decentralised, thereby reflecting and reinforcing the non-hierarchical and cooperative characteristics of the movement as a whole. Amongst a gaggle of clowns, there are no real leaders, only temporary colonels or majors for individual actions. As such, the clowning experience is about

the empowerment of individuals, and the reinforcement of the collective as a whole. Via laughter and the embedded humour, participants develop a strong bond. Even a relatively short clowning activity provides activists with a joint experience that can be reflected on and referred to for months or even years to come.

Through the humorous, inclusive experience, traditional barriers and differences were removed, allowing participants to form a strong connection that extended well beyond the basic affiliation with the cause:

Everyone would be smiling and laughing the whole hour and we'd go, okay, we need to get down to some analytical kind of technical things and then we would talk about props, costumes, all the serious stuff, but it was about the fusion of the group and we had a strong group. That's what made the difference. (Jay, interview, 13th May 2011)

Based on observation, formal interviews and informal conversations I argue that this resulting affinity and connectedness with other WA ANM activists as well as the cause itself is a major benefit of humorous activism and a core means of ensuring the long-term survival of the movement itself.

In summary, the example of the WA ANM Clown Army illustrated how humorous actions function on a number of levels, thereby building both cultural and social capital. They attract and draw in audiences and help communicate key messages in memorable ways. However, humorous actions fulfil an even more important purpose internally, by providing creative outlets for individual activists and a means to recharge their energy levels. Most significantly, they re-enforce existing values and strengthen the WA ANM's collective identity.

For Putnam (2000, 2002) and Gittell and Vidal (1998) the blending of bonding and bridging capital "lies at the core of consensus organising" (Gittell & Vidal, 1998, p. 53). As demonstrated above, humour can help with the accumulation of both types of social capital, hence contributing to the size of a movement's support network. Bridging social capital provides access to new nodes and resources. Bonding social capital ensures that these resources remain available over a period of time, ensuring the sustainability of the movement. Together, they add to the "actual or potential resources that are linked to possession of a durable network of...relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition...which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital" (Bourdieu 1997, p. 51). However, as Bourdieu suggested, it is not only the size of these durable

networks and relationships, but also the quality of their nodes that are crucial when aiming to challenge existing power relationships. Valuable nodes, or affiliates, can provide technical skills (e.g. graphic design, writing), issue specific expertise (e.g. individuals with corporate mining background), or access to other networks (e.g. political, media). The WA ANM's networks and relationships are discussed further in the next chapter.

Chapter summary

To conclude, although humour may not be a characteristic that the average citizen associates with activism, I argue that when comedy, absurdity and hilarity are embedded in activism, they provide activists with valuable capital and hence a greater share of power. Humour fulfils a number of important roles for the WA ANM. Firstly, in contrast to violent outbursts or aggressive protests, humorous actions literally draw in the community and affinity groups, thereby enabling the WA ANM to build and expand bridging social capital, that is to enlarge its networks and support structures. Secondly, humour is recognised as an effective means to share and strengthen knowledge. By publicly challenging the status quo, as well as sharing expertise externally and reinforcing it internally, the WA ANM builds its cultural capital. However, although humorous actions can be seen as communication strategies in themselves, their key benefit is for the survival of the movement, by building and strengthening bonding social capital. Humour can achieve this by re-energising individual activists via participation in fun and enjoyable acts of civil disobedience, which provide a clear break from traditional activist activities and day to day responsibilities, hence limit the need for recovery breaks. Furthermore, humour helps develop and strengthen the WA ANM's collective identity. The WA ANM has traditionally been characterised by a deeply engrained commitment to collective decision making, non-violent direct action and civil disobedience. Humorous actions can aid in reinforcing these core values and beliefs amongst what is essentially a heterogeneous group of people of various backgrounds, experiences and social classes. I therefore argue that humour positively impacts on the sustainability of the movement over time and aids activists in securing valuable cultural and social capital.

Based on my experience with the WA ANM, the function of humorous activism is not to attract media attention or to engage with corporations and government departments. Instead, WA ANM activists are courteous but largely ambivalent about the level of engagement with corporate representatives. The concept of humour is

largely misunderstood and underutilised within a corporate context, which can lead to activists' capabilities being underestimated or even dismissed. Based on my observations with the WA ANM, I argue that some of their humour-generated cultural and social capital can be converted into much needed economic capital, such as donations (financial or in kind). Together, they add to the WA ANM's social capital, which translates into the movement's prestige and legitimacy, hence its share of power and ability to influence the status quo.

This chapter examined the role of humour in the shaping of the activist identity. As one of the aims of this study is to gain an understanding how activists perceive their role in society, as opposed to how scholars or corporations interpret their function, the following chapter examines the activist identity, in relation to the WA ANM.

Chapter 7

Networks and relationships

Public relations scholars have traditionally held that fostering symmetrical communication between activists and corporations is a sign of excellent public relations. Critical scholars have challenged the value of the symmetrical model; however, it continues to represent a dominant theme throughout the traditional activism literature in PR scholarship. I therefore consider it crucial to address the model, and its limitations. This chapter closely examines the so-called activist-corporation “relationship”, before concluding that activists’ engagement with corporate representatives is limited due to the irreconcilable differences that lie at the core of the two factions’ worldviews. However, if activists do not engage with corporations, who do they connect and communicate with? Also, if activists lack the economic capital that is available to corporate entities, what are the alternative resources that provide them with the necessary power to challenge the status quo and influence change? This chapter explores the WA ANM’s networks and relationships; first internally, by examining the different groups and initiatives that support the movement, and then externally, illustrated by examples of two campaign strategies. This chapter concludes that activists like the WA ANM do not possess sufficient (economic) capital and power to bring about change. Instead, they rely on social capital, i.e. the support and endorsement of the wider community, in order to facilitate lasting change. The targeting of individual corporations plays a minor role in anti-nuclear activism. Instead, the WA ANM’s focus has shifted to corporations’ key stakeholders and the legacy left by the uranium mining sector as whole.

The West Australian Anti Nuclear Movement and its affiliates

Public relations literature has to date predominantly conceptualised activists as a homogenous entity (P. Hughes & Demetrious, 2006). Based on three of the most commonly used and referred to definitions in PR practice and scholarship, activists are groups of “two or more individuals” (L. A. Grunig, 1992a, p. 504; L. A. Grunig, et al., 2002, p. 446), “who feel strongly about an issue” (Holtzhausen, 2007, p. 375) and organise in order to “exert pressure on organizations or other institutions to change policies, practices, or conditions” (M. F. Smith, 2005, p. 5). These definitions are so broad and all-encompassing that they become meaningless. They

furthermore fail to acknowledge the multifaceted nature of activism, ranging from individual 'crusaders' and small community groups, to those well-resourced international not-for-profit organisations that have to date attracted the majority of attention in PR scholarship. Consequently, definitions of activism ignore the vast disparity in resources, structure, funding, decision making processes, communication styles and capabilities.

Furthermore, the activism label implies a clearly defined group of individuals with homologous characteristics, traits and interests. In Chapter 8 I closely examine the activist identity as perceived by study participants, illustrating that activist groups like the WA ANM comprise of individuals from a wide range of backgrounds, with differing abilities and fluctuating levels of commitment. However, the activist tag, as used in PR literature to date, suggests an ease in identifying who belongs to a group or movement, and who does not; who is an activist, and who is not. Yet questions arise about how to identify individuals as activists; in this context, anti-nuclear activists. Is this process based on their actions? Their affiliations? Opinions voiced? And where lays the difference between a supporter of a particular issue, an advocate and an activist? Furthermore, does this imply that activist labels are mutually exclusive, i.e. that an anti-nuclear activist cannot also be a refugee advocate? These questions point to the limitations of current definitions of activists.

Findings indicate that the authentic activist experience and identity are very different and more complex than is implied by existing PR literature. Instead, they illustrate that activists' alliances change and their level of commitment vary over time (this is further discussed in Chapter 8, also see appendices 10.1-10.4, which detail the development of the WA ANM over the course of this study). Furthermore, collectives and movements like the WA ANM incorporate an assortment of groups and organisations, which are all classified according to the simple label of WA ANM. Some of these are more closely aligned to the cause and are more active than others; for example, affiliate groups, who support the movement's sentiment, but may not usually participate in regular anti-nuclear actions. This complexity is visually illustrated below.



Illustration 7.1: Group representation within the West Australian Anti Nuclear Movement

Illustration 7.1 depicts the diverse nature of the WA ANM, based on associated groups, as opposed to individual activists. The illustration represents my perception and understanding as a researcher of the WA ANM at a given point of time, i.e. at the commencement of the main data collection phase. The large green circle represents the WA ANM. At the top right sits the State’s peak environmental body, the Conservation Council of WA (CCWA), which refers to itself as the “State’s foremost non-profit, non-government conservation organisation” (Conservation Council of Western Australia, 2010a). At the time of this study, the Keep WA Uranium Free Campaign was one of eight priority campaign areas (Conservation Council of Western Australia, 2010b). Hence, although the Conservation Council employed the State’s Uraniumfree Advocate and provided a large proportion of the movement’s resources, only a relatively small part of its overall focus directly overlapped with that of the WA ANM. Nevertheless, the Council is a key supplier of

WA ANM resources, including the Uraniumfree Advocate and access to office equipment. It facilitates tax deductible donations and provides campaign visibility to a large proportion of the WA community via its extensive database and recognition within the community. At the time of this study, the Council was receiving State government funding, which contributed to its communication abilities and enabled it to highlight key campaigns via its monthly magazine (and the dedicated anti nuclear edition: Conservation Council of Western Australia, 2011c; see e.g. articles titled 'Australian Uranium in Japan Nuclear Disaster' and 'Nuclear Power - the Thirstiest of them All' written by key activists in Conservation Council of Western Australia, 2011d). The funding also enabled it to provide campaign updates and background information via its sleek website, and to distribute calls for actions (usually the signing of petitions) through its extensive marketing database. The Council emphasised "working with community, government and industry towards a more sustainable future for Western Australia" (Conservation Council of Western Australia, 2010a), a statement which tacitly supports the notion of a compromise between corporations and activists as promoted in the traditional PR literature into activism. The Conservation Council's focus has been on the gathering and distribution of information, support for other conservation groups, and the lobbying of government and industry decision makers. Due to its strong profile and 45 year history, staff and in particular its Director, Piers Verstegen, are frequently quoted in the State's media (Conservation Council of Western Australia, 2012) (e.g. AAP, 2010c; M. Bennett, 2010; Hammond, 2009; McHugh, 2010; Towie, 2009; S. White, 2011).

However, the CCWA's NGO status, government funding and representative role for over 100 conservation groups and organisations necessitates a relatively conservative and conventional communication style and campaign approach, which may not appeal to many grassroots activists. The BUMP Collective was therefore launched on World Environment Day in June 2009 to enable the planning and execution of creative, thought-provoking publicity stunts and humorous initiatives that would not be deemed appropriate under the Conservation Council brand (private conversation with Kay as part of participant observation at the ANAWA offices, September-October 2009). Although the Council-funded Uraniumfree Advocate maintained the energy of the Collective, and while both groups collectively supported the anti-nuclear cause (Conservation Council of Western Australia, 2011a), they performed very different roles within the WA ANM. Publicly, BUMP

publicity stunts were not to be associated with the CCWA brand (observation during BUMP planning meetings and at actions).

During the time of my participant observation, BUMP was the only group with weekly planning meetings. The Collective also enabled communication and facilitated cooperation across the other groups and initiatives that were involved in the WA ANM. It assisted with the planning and coordination of various key activities, such as the 2011 and 2012 Footprints for Peace (Footprints for Peace, 2010) walks to raise awareness of the dangers of uranium mining and the annual WANFA conferences. Due to its visibility in the community and media as a result of public actions, the BUMP Collective is depicted as close to the WA ANM activist core in Illustration 7.1. However, it is important to note that despite the crossover in key activists and the close affiliation between the groups, in contrast to CCWA representatives' recognition, BUMP activists were dismissed, rather than consulted by industry representatives (e.g. see the Cottesloe Beach Spill action as detailed in Chapter 6). BUMP's focus was on community engagement and challenging the status quo in a thought-provoking and fun way. Over time, the BUMP logo that was designed specifically for the 2009 launch, disappeared from most of the communication, eventually being replaced by the radioactive logo that is being used in various forms by the worldwide anti-nuclear movement. During the course of this study, BUMP maintained a small number of organisers (three). However, the composition of the group varied dramatically over time, at both planning meetings and actions. This points to the fluid nature of BUMP and consequently the WA ANM.



Illustration 7.2 BUMP and anti-nuclear logo

As a not-for-profit non-governmental environmental advocacy organisation, the Wilderness Society performed a similar role to the Conservation Council and the WA-branch contributed to the funding of the Uraniumfree Advocate. Although based in the same building, publicly the two organisations differentiate themselves by supporting aligned, but separate causes. For example, the Wilderness Society might comment on nuclear issues under its Climate Change Campaign focus

(Wilderness Society, 2010), but in Western Australia it was more vocal about the Protect the Kimberley campaign during the data collection phase for this study. Consequently, the Society is represented in the diagram at the periphery of the movement, despite the potential to perform a more prominent role if required.

A third major influence within the WA ANM was the Australian Greens, a political party. At the time of data collection, the WA branch was represented by four Members in the West Australian Legislative Council, and two in the Australian Senate. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Australian Greens emerged out of the WA anti-nuclear movement and various other environmental campaigns in the early 1990s, reflecting the development of Greens Parties around the world. The party was particularly vocal in its opposition to uranium mining and nuclear power in Western Australia. Its representatives included Robin Chapple, MLC, as Member for the Mining and Pastoral Region and Senator Scott Ludlam, Australian Greens' spokesperson on Nuclear Issues (The Greens Western Australia, 2011), both of whom continued to be active within the WA ANM. As a political party, with values and core beliefs, such as ecological sustainability, grassroots participatory democracy, social justice, and peace and non-violence (Australian Greens, 2011a), WA-based Greens representatives and their office staff performed a key role within the movement, by providing visibility, access to decision makers and parliamentary processes, as well as resources in terms of research capabilities, graphic design, administrative support and promotional capabilities. However, despite their vocal opposition to uranium mining and nuclear power, as a national party the Greens policies were required to address a wide range of subjects, from human rights and multiculturalism to health, education and disability issues (Australian Greens, 2011b). The party is therefore depicted at the periphery of the movement in Illustration 7.1. The substantial area of overlap represents the strong alignment and provision of social capital that was accorded the growth through their association. The alignment also acknowledges priorities beyond the anti-nuclear portfolio. Individual representatives of the Australian Greens were at times also represented in other groups closer to the centre of the WA ANM.

At the outset of this study, ANAWA performed a crucial role as the umbrella body of the movement, hence its representation in the illustration towards the Activist Core in the diagram. In contrast to BUMP, ANAWA's focus was on research, political lobbying and education (Anti Nuclear Alliance of Australia (ANAWA), 2009a) (participant observation at the ANAWA office, 28th September – 2nd October 2009). During this time ANAWA's office was a central meeting point for activists from

various affiliated groups, including the Undermining the Uranium Industry working party. The presence of the former Greens Senator and Nobel Peace Prize Nominee Jo Vallentine as Chairperson (see Chapter 2) further added to the visibility and symbolic capital of the Alliance. In addition to the Conservation Council, ANAWA was able to offer limited paid employment for anti-nuclear activists. However, over the course of this study ANAWA gradually ran out of funding and consequently visibility, moving further away from the centre of the WA ANM. By the end of this study, the ANAWA website had been taken down. However, interviews and observations indicated this might have been a temporary measure, as one part-time staff member continued to provide media commentary on behalf of the Alliance and the wider movement at the time of completing this thesis in 2013. Like the CCWA, ANAWA members supported and even contributed to BUMP actions, however, publicly the ANAWA brand was not associated with publicity stunts. This brief overview further points to the fluid nature of the movement—indeed, over the course of the data collection, ANAWA moved from its central role in illustration 7.1, to a less prominent position over the subsequent months.

The People for Nuclear Disarmament (PND) had the longest history as part of the WA ANM. Many of its members' involvement dated back to the disarmament protests of the 1980s (interview with Joy, 29th September 2009). However, activists' age contributed to the shrinking of the group, requiring it to limit itself to vigils and information stalls in the city. These were usually run under the broader anti-nuclear banner, as opposed to the PND as a specific identity. As the recipient of a bequest at the beginning of the 21st century, PND was the only non-NGO group within the WA ANM with economic capital, which was used to pay for ANAWA staff (interview with Joy, 29th September 2009 and interview with Johnno, 3rd March 2011). The illustration thus depicts the close relationship between the two groups. Individual PND members participated in events organised by other groups, such as the Breakfast at Barnett's (see Chapter 6).

The Raging Grannies were of similar age and anti-nuclear protest experience as PND contributors. Some activists participated in both groups at varying times. However, due to their interest in humorous activities and their outgoing presence, the Grannies were much more visible and clearly recognisable as a crucial component of the WA ANM, hence the larger, purple circle in the illustration. In contrast to other groups, their outgoing nature, thought-provoking songs and colourful costumes clearly identified them as a separate group within the wider WA ANM and a core 'act' at various protests (e.g. at the Uranium Conference protest on

21st July 2010 at the Fremantle Esplanade Hotel). Whilst their songs were predominantly focused on anti-nuclear issues, they also included related, topical matters. The Grannies are therefore depicted towards the periphery of the WA ANM.

The visibility and presence of WANFA varied throughout this study. At the beginning of the main data collection phase, WANFA had just emerged as a separate entity, formed at an Australian Nuclear Free Alliance (ANFA) meeting in South Australia in September 2009 (Western Australian Nuclear Free Alliance, 2010a). Bringing together Aboriginal people, relevant NGOs and health professionals, WANFA operated relatively independently throughout the year, with the exception of its annual meetings, which relied on support from the wider movement in terms of event management and financial support for remotely based delegates, as well as logistics. WANFA draws on a State-wide network of Aboriginal people and provides powerful, recognisable and authoritative spokespeople to comment on the perceived danger and health impact of uranium projects (Perth Now, 2010a, 2010b) (Also see WANFA media statements: Western Australian Nuclear Free Alliance, 2012a). Based on their remote location, mining projects have a greater, immediate impact on Aboriginal communities, as opposed to city based activists and investors. WANFA is therefore represented in Illustration 7.1 as an influential group within the WA ANM (hence the considerable size of the circle, despite the relatively small number of activists), which operates slightly independently from the core (participant observation at WANFA and planning meetings, January – June 2010).

The Fremantle Anti Nuclear Group (FANG) existed predominantly as a virtual entity throughout this study, hence the limited representation in Illustration 7.1. Maintained by a small number of activists who were equally involved with other groups and initiatives within the WA ANM, FANG had a large presence (e.g. its well maintained website: Fremantle Anti Nuclear Group (FANG), 2010c) and was much talked about, but did not actually operate as a separate entity. Based on an analysis of its website alone, one might expect it to perform a more active role as part of the Movement. However, my experience as a participant observer over more than two years enabled me to conclude that FANG as an activist group was relatively dormant, although its brand was being maintained for possible revival at a later stage. Despite FANG activists' participation in multiple groups, FANG's distinctive positioning was referred to as outgoing, colourful and possibly a little controversial.

This positioning is largely linked to its close association with the Clown Army. Due to the small number of volunteers involved in both these groups, the two collectives almost became synonymous over time. As detailed in Chapter 6, the Clown Army's focus had been on re-energising existing activists, as well as communicating thought-provoking, anti-nuclear messages to the wider community in a fun and engaging way. Whilst the Conservation Council had the resources to employ dedicated staff, the Clown Army relied on word of mouth communication and creative styles of expression, usually in the form of street theatre. As their communication style strongly contrasted with what was considered to be appropriate amongst corporate communicators, Clowns' communication abilities and knowledge were easily dismissed as inconsequential by mining conference delegates (e.g. Fremantle Uranium Conference Protest in July 2009, interview with Kay, 30th September 2009). Like FANG, the Clown Army was a frequent topic of conversation throughout this study. However, after a number of public performances during the formative stages of this study, the group appeared to become inactive due to the lack of a coordinator. Numerous efforts were made to revive the Army, with limited success due to resource constraints. However, as an anti-nuclear sub-brand in itself, the Clown Army representatives remained present in planning meetings (e.g. anti-nuclear planning workshop, 19th-20th February 2010) and conversations amongst activists. The Clown Army's close relationship to FANG and its prominent role within the movement are depicted in illustration 7.1, although the model recognises its diminishing visibility by positioning it towards the periphery of the WA ANM.

In addition to the key groups reflected within the green circle in Illustration 7.1, a wide range of affiliated groups provided emotional and logistical support. In return, the WA ANM promoted affiliated causes and their initiatives (e.g. promotion for a protest against juveniles in adult prisons on 17th April 2010 on the Uraniumfree WA Facebook site Uraniumfree WA, 2011b), such as the Death in Custody Committee, the Refugee Action Network and the Save the Kimberley Campaign (participant observation at BUMP planning meetings, January – June 2010, as well as weekly ANAWA and BUMP email updates). Although the actual groups may appear separate to the outside observer, activists frequently moved between different collectives and initiatives and therefore their position in the diagram changed. Illustration 7.1 represents a snapshot of the movement at a single point in time (late 2009). However, the composition of the network over time was in effect fluid. In addition, many individuals held multiple positions within these affiliated groups,

which suggests that the relationships are more complex and nuanced than the diagram is able to capture (see Appendix 10.1-10.4 for an illustration of how key activists within the movement changed over the course of this study).

Implications based on the model

Illustration 7.1 is an over-simplification of the movement, but emphasises that although the WA ANM may appear to outsiders, and is referred to in the media, as a unified group, in reality it is impossible to determine the movement's reach and quantity of supporters at any given point in time. By definition, movements are complex, dynamic and disordered (Klandermans & Staggenborg, 2002). Their composition, scope and activity levels are constantly changing in response to their environment. Individuals drift in, become involved and eventually move on to start new groups, pursue other interests or meet personal and professional demands. Such a shift may result in the (temporary) decline of a group. An example of this is the Rockingham Anti Nuclear Group (RANG), which was mentioned at the outset of this study (page 54) and had an online presence, but lacked any representation throughout the data collection process. Activist availability changes the type and level of activities, as well as the composition of the movement. Likewise, individual groups and collectives become more active and visible and shortly thereafter may dismantle, lie dormant, become less active or influential, or move towards the periphery of the movement.

Although these groups performed a crucial role as part of the WA ANM, their internal structure and decision making processes varied, ranging from a fluid and energetic collective at the Clown Army end of the spectrum, to a more corporation-like and hierarchical model at the other, such as the Conservation Council. The BUMP Collective emphasised collective decision making, but was slightly more structured due to the presence of frequently changing, but nevertheless dedicated core volunteers. ANAWA's structure tended to be flat, but nevertheless structured, with clear responsibilities, a Chairperson and a reference group to report to. This difference in structure, communication styles, resources and strategic positioning, emphasises the multifaceted, complex nature of activism and further highlights the limitations of the existing, all-encompassing activist label, which has encouraged generalisations by PR scholars, but fails to foster a genuine interest in the various forms of activist communication.

These differences furthermore highlight how WA ANM activists' focus is on actions, rather than being concerned with actual groups or the public brands a particular initiative is associated with. Findings indicate that due to a lack of prescribed structures and hierarchies in most of the affiliated groups, the WA ANM was able to be dynamic and spontaneous. Throughout the course of this study spokespeople not only changed frequently, but a lack of hierarchies and rotating responsibilities were also encouraged (participation observation in BUMP planning meetings, January – July 2010). With the exception of those working as part of one of the larger organisations, individual activists were not restricted by internal approval processes and policies. They were therefore able to shape messages, set campaign priorities and express themselves in a unique, individualistic and often non-strategic way. This may result in a lack of message control, i.e. the potential distribution of contradictory, confusing and/or mixed messages, as well as a reduction in the movement's overall strategic capabilities.

For example, at a gathering outside the BHP AGM, a number of protesters were more vocal and aggressive towards delegates than core activists would usually encourage. Also, a number of supporters publicly voiced their opposition to any forms of corporate mining, which did not correspond with the WA ANM position, which was exclusively focused on the mining of uranium. Despite the WA ANM prescribing non-violence, it had no control over individuals who decided to express themselves in a more aggressive way (e.g. arrests following a disturbance at the International Uranium Conference public forum on 7th June 2011). Observations suggest that creative benefits may outweigh the associated risks. Due to the lack of resources, campaign material was available in an "open source" format (i.e. via emails, distributed at meetings, responsibilities allocated based on availability of volunteers), inviting individual activists to create their own material and messages, thereby enabling the WA ANM to draw on the totality of its available social capital.

Unlike larger, more sophisticated, and structured organisations, the WA ANM lacked the infrastructure and resources to fundraise. Most donations came from within the network and were cause-specific, e.g. for a major walk aimed to raise awareness of a new mine site or to contribute to an activist's travel cost for an interstate action or an overseas meeting. These findings suggest that in the context of the WA ANM, return on investment is evaluated at a personal level, rather than measured against an organisation's bottom line. Here the major concern is for individual activists to assess if their time and energy is invested in a meaningful way, or if their personal impact may be greater somewhere else.

To summarise, in contrast to the public relations literature, this study shows that activist groups are not homogenous entities. A close analysis of the WA ANM illustrates that a movement may constitute multiple groups and organisations, with different communication styles, abilities, priorities and structures. This illustrates that movements are not monolithic, but in reality consist of a number of groups and individuals, thereby constituting a fluid network. This multifaceted, dynamic and continuously changing nature became evident when I embraced the role of participant. Many of the observations included in this study would not have been possible through secondary research.

The WA ANM activists' focus was on action, rather than the use of branding techniques or marketing affiliations. The data indicates that activists perceived groups and organisations as a means to an end, with the key focus being on people and their abilities. This flexible nature of the movement allowed it to maximise its social capital, as activists set out to raise awareness of the anti-nuclear cause via closely associated as well as affiliated groups and organisations, and without the limitations of approval processes and prescribed movement spokespeople. However, the 'open source' approach to communication, through which individuals are invited and even encouraged to adapt and interpret existing material and campaign strategies, undermined the movement's strategic abilities, as it became impossible to control or manage messages. This is a key criterion in the corporate PR environment, but was not perceived as important by WA ANM activists.

Assumption of activist-corporation relationship

The previous section has highlighted differences between activists' communication priorities, and how these contrast with those that PR literature states are a priority of corporate PR departments, such as Return on Investment (ROI), message control, and planned strategies. In addition, study findings challenge not only the existence of a "zone of compromise" (L. A. Grunig, 1992a) but also the presence of an activist – organisation relationship, as I discuss in detail over the following paragraphs.

Findings indicate that WA ANM activists are not interested in seeking any form of compromise or agreement with the corporations whose business practices they challenge. This contrasts the common "best practice" recommendation in traditional public relations literature (see e.g. J. E. Grunig & Grunig, 1997; M. F. Smith & Ferguson, 2001). In fact, engagement between representatives of mining corporations and anti-nuclear activists was minimal throughout this study. If invited,

activists were prepared to engage in friendly and respectful conversations with mining representatives. However, based on observations and activists' own admissions, these types of meetings were infrequent and typically resulted in both sides carefully guarding any information that may have provided the other with an advantage. Throughout the course of this study, the WA Uraniumfree Advocate was invited on at least two occasions to meet with corporate mining representatives on behalf of the Conservation Council WA. Although she attended on behalf of the WA ANM, insights gained during these meetings did not warrant major discussion as part of the weekly BUMP action planning meetings (participant observation, January – June 2011), indicating the meetings' lack of perceived value. Instead, most interactions between activists and corporate representatives were serendipitous (e.g. as part of the Cottesloe Spill Action, see Chapter 6, page 157) or at Annual General Meetings. The latter is examined in more detail later in this chapter on page 216.

My observations indicate that the primary reason behind the lack of meaningful engagement from the corporate perspective is due to the mining industry dismissing anti-nuclear activists as ineffective, poorly informed and essentially a minority with limited to no impact on the success of their business strategy and bottom line; for example, dismissive comments to activists by corporate delegates when passing protesters on entering BHP Billiton offices on Perth on 19th November 2009. Further, an analysis of media coverage over the course of this study indicates that uranium mining representatives rarely ever commented on, or even acknowledged opposition. In the few incidences where they did, activists were dismissed as not representative of the wider community. For example, a Uranium Conference spokesperson was quoted in the media as stating "Only about 25 people attended the protest" (Pratt, 2011). Yet, I attended this protest meeting and counted over 70 protesters, representing the Conservation Council, the Medical Association for the Prevention of War, the Greens, unions and traditional owners²². At Annual General Meetings corporate representatives avoided and frequently ignored activists, even if approached directly on their way into the venue. As a result, I argue that the WA ANM does not feature prominently enough on uranium mining corporations' stakeholder maps to qualify them as a key stakeholder.

²² Traditional Owners are people who, through membership in a descent group or clan, have responsibility for caring for particular Country.

Perceived lack of genuine engagement

One of the key public relations activities in relation to major projects, such as the establishment of new mine sites, is community consultation (e.g. Harrison, 2011; Tench & Yeomans, 2009). Consultation is widely positioned as best practice and a key strategy to “incorporate representative community opinions into decision making” (Johnston, 2010, p. 217). However, within the mining context, community consultation is not only part of an organisation’s voluntary corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts; it is also a legal requirement (Department of Industry Tourism and Resources, 2006).

WA ANM activists appeared to be as dismissive of corporations, as they were of them. They were cynical about mining corporations’ consultative processes, referring to them as a farce, “just part of their PR job” (Johno) and essentially misleading. Alycia shared her experience and frustration:

Another favourite word a company likes to use is, “We’ve consulted with this group.” I went out to the Yeelirrie, to BHP’s proposed Yeelirrie mine because I wanted to know what was going on out there. They showed me what they wanted to show me and they told me what they wanted to tell me, and then they published a newsletter saying we’ve consulted. (Alycia, interview, 28th February 2011)

Based on Alycia’s experience, consultation is not the transparent process it claims to be, but an additional opportunity for organisations to promote aspects of their operations. As the next quote emphasises, WA ANM activists perceived consultation as a purely legislative requirement and not as a genuine interest in engagement or even commitment by corporations to listen to the activists’ or community’s point of view:

They give us a briefing every now and then [...] so that they can say they’ve briefed all the stakeholders. (Joy, interview, 15th March 2011)

WA ANM activists recognised community consultation as a crucial part of public relations activities, but referred to them in a derogatory manner, implying deception and self-interest:

Every corporation has sustainability policies, and social policies, and have transparency clauses, and you know it doesn’t mean a hell of a lot except it’s good for their PR. (Alice, interview, 6th June 2011)

As a result, activists had become cynical and suspicious of consultation exercises, labelling them as misleading, deceptive and essentially unethical:

They [mining companies] are full of lies. They'll tell you one thing and the very next day they'll be doing completely different. (Alycia, interview, 28th February, 2011)

As such, consultation was perceived as a non-binding means to an end, driven by the objective to obtain mining approval. The quotes above illustrate that WA ANM activists did not trust corporations. As both sides, activists and corporations, closely watch each other, consultation processes turn into a game in which both parties carefully guard how much information and insight they disclose.

WA ANM activists particularly criticised the treatment, level of engagement with, and respect for Indigenous communities and Aboriginal elders. As uranium deposits are located in the Australian outback, often hundreds of kilometres from the next major settlement (see Chapter 2), traditional owners are frequently sought out by corporations as part of project approval processes. Alycia explained the apprehension of Indigenous communities' to engage with corporations, arguing that "consultation" may be the term used by corporations, but does not describe what she referred to as the actual, exploitative and ultimately profit-driven nature of this type of engagement:

I remember meeting this Aboriginal man from the Northern Territory and he had a company searching around on his country, and they wanted to meet him, to consult with him, but he knew, he understood that having a meeting, sitting down and talking was to them, consultation. They could take a photo, they could tick that box. So he ran away, he ran away to New South Wales so that they couldn't find him. [...] So sometimes the best thing anyone can do is just avoid them and run away from them. (Alycia, interview, 28th February 2011)

Corporate representatives were perceived as lacking respect for cultural heritage, putting short-term financial gain ahead of environmental and cultural sustainability, as well as the health of Indigenous Australians living close to proposed mine sites. Here, consultation with elders was perceived as a necessary means to an end, as opposed to an opportunity to learn from and consider the needs and concerns of Indigenous communities.

One prominent, widely criticised example of corporate engagement was the establishment of an Indigenous Dialogue Group by the Australian Uranium Association (AUA) in 2009. Described as a "landmark initiative" in its media release

(Australian Uranium Association, 2009b) and referred to as “leading practice” on its website (Australian Uranium Association, 2011), the long-term involvement of traditional landowners promises economic benefits and better access to “good information” (Australian Uranium Association, 2011). However, a close inspection of the founding members of the Indigenous Dialogue Group indicates that the vast majority of its members were directly affiliated with the mining industry, including CEOs, Presidents and Managing Directors of various mining companies and projects (e.g. Toro Resources, BHP Billiton, Ngarda Civil and Mining) (Australian Uranium Association, 2009b). WA ANM activists, in particular Indigenous representatives as part of WANFA, repeatedly criticised the AUA’s Dialogue Group as a publicity stunt (e.g. Donna’s speech outside the Uranium Conference on 21st July 2010, observation at BUMP planning meetings, January – June 2011), challenging the legitimacy of the carefully selected members, who represent “the industry rather than a true Aboriginal community view” (Western Australian Nuclear Free Alliance, 2012b). Whilst the AUA’s Dialogue Group was invited to share their views at conferences and during consultation exercises, traditional owners felt their views were ignored and opportunities to have their voice heard were limited to demonstrating outside the official venues (Lawson, 2010). According to Dutta (2011), dominant organisational structures preclude the possibilities of authentic dialogue with less powerful actors, as dialogue is turned into a strategic tool to reinforce existing power structures. Within this context, “the Indigenous-mining Dialogue Group set up by the Australian Uranium Association to bridge the gap between Aboriginal Australians and the uranium mining industry is constituted within the agendas of the mining industry to usurp Indigenous land to build mines” (Dutta, 2011, p. 241), and not to facilitate genuine dialogue or mutually beneficial outcomes (Statham, 2009).

Who gets to participate in dialogue is dictated by the interests of the system in sustaining itself as an economic enterprise and in carrying out its exploitations through minimisation of resistance. (Dutta, 2011, p.241)

Based on this experience, WA ANM activists became highly sceptical and disillusioned about industry’s efforts to engage community groups in a meaningful way. The Australian Conservation Foundation nuclear-free campaigner Dave Sweeney is quoted in Dutta (2011) as referring to consultation practices such as those of the AUA as “a cynical PR exercise” (p. 241), mirroring WA ANM activists’ comments in BUMP planning meetings and at public actions.

Activists openly detested what they perceived as a profit and outcomes-driven means to influence public opinion in one's favour, commenting publicly via their personal social media profiles: "[Mining Magnate] and his PR machine make me want to scream" (Sonia, 12 April 2011, Facebook status) and "PR stunt by mining magnate Cringe" (Danny, 13 April 2011, Facebook status). Within this context, public relations or PR had become a term that refers to misleading and deceptive practices by organisations in an effort to reinforce existing power relationships.

Irreconcilable differences

WA ANM activists and mining corporations see and understand the world through two contrasting lenses. Whilst activists are driven by a Conservation Frame, which emphasises family values, the legacy left for future generations, Indigenous land rights and environmental justice, corporations understand the world through an Economic Frame, and thus accentuate the creation of employment opportunities, return on investment and the worldwide demand for uranium—most notably in developing countries—as an opportunity which Western Australia cannot afford to miss out on.

Throughout this study, the Australian uranium industry was proactive in promoting the benefits of uranium mining in the mainstream, and in particular the specialist business and investor press (e.g. Daniel Mercer, 2011; Nason, 2010). Industry generated media coverage, promoting a strong economic forecast and global uranium demand, spiked in the lead up to and during the time of the uranium conferences (The 2011 Uranium Conference: e.g. Fullerton, 2011; Jerga, 2011a, 2011b; Pratt, 2011) (The 2010 Uranium Conference: e.g. AAP, 2010b; ABC News, 2010a, 2010b; M. Bennett, 2010; Granger, 2010; Annabel Hepworth & Damon Kitney, 2010). Media reports about a uranium trade deal with Russia (Osborne, 2010), and the overturning of a ban on uranium exports to India (Labor ends ban on uranium exports to India, 2011) focused exclusively on economic benefits and job creation, staying clear of any moral or ethical obligations.

Despite accusing nuclear opponents of using the disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi plant in March 2011 to their advantage (e.g. Cameron, 2011), it was the pro-nuclear lobby, rather than anti-nuclear activists, that was most vocal following the nuclear meltdown in Fukushima (Devine, 2011; Jerga, 2011a, 2011c; Quinn, 2011). They predicted a continued strong demand in developing countries, such as India and

China (England, 2011a; Uranium will survive Japan's disaster, says Gillard, 2011), and a fast recovery of the uranium ore price (S. Tasker, 2011; T. Tasker, 2011). Some nuclear proponents even used the opportunity to promote the introduction of nuclear energy in Australia (Trenwith, 2011), positioning it as “the safest of all of the major energy electricity generating technologies” (Ridley, 2011) and the only reliable “carbon free” (Strong, 2011) energy source, as alternative sources such as wind and solar fail to provide reliable base-load power (Kelton, 2011). Drawing on their in-house public relations expertise and external consultants, the uranium mining industry went into damage control mode following the nuclear meltdown in Japan. A major focus was unquestionably on reassuring investors (England, 2011b), thereby avoiding further damage to Australian-listed uranium stock and risk funding for existing mining projects. Government reassurances were perceived as particularly important during the early days, resulting in the Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard publicly reassuring investors and international markets of the country’s continued commitment to uranium exports within ten days of the disaster (AFP, 2011b; Uranium will survive Japan's disaster, says Gillard, 2011). An even greater and consistent supporter of the uranium mining and nuclear industry was the then Minister for Resources and Energy Martin Ferguson (Jerga, 2011c), who repeatedly joined the pro-uranium lobby in publicly criticising anti-nuclear activists for creating investment instability (AAP, 2010a; Jerga, 2011b; Kelly, 2010).

Through the corporate lens, activists—in particular, the Australian Greens—were perceived as “totally out of touch” and lacking any “concept of the business of mining” (Managing Director of Toro Energy, quoted in Granger, et al., 2010). Their continued interest in a ban on uranium mining was described as “driven by an outdated ideology and a disregard for regional jobs and investment” (AAP, 2010a). Overall, the anti-nuclear opposition was positioned as ill-informed, idealistic, disruptive, anti-progress and essentially a risk to the Australian economy (Devine, 2011; Pennells, Knowles, & O’Connell, 2011; Ridley, 2011). Environmental and health concerns were largely ignored and easily dismissed by referring opponents to formalised legislative approval processes (McHugh, 2010), instead of actively listening to community concerns. In contrast, via their public actions and publications, WA ANM activists challenged the State’s and Australian society’s pro-industry mindset and support for the commercialisation of natural assets. They criticised the pro-uranium lobby for ignoring environmental and health concerns (AAP, 2010c), and questioned the emphasis of short term economic gain over long-term health, cultural and environmental impacts (Fullerton, 2011; Daniel Mercer,

2011; Murphy, 2010a). By framing their discourses around conservation, activists repositioned the industry's efforts to promote the future of nuclear energy as "reckless and futile" (Jerga, 2011b) and exclusively driven by self-interest (Jerga, 2011a).

During the immediate aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, anti-nuclear activists called on the industry to take responsibility for the role of Australian uranium in the effected power station (Conservation Council of Western Australia, 2011b), a demand that was ignored by the pro-nuclear lobby. This sentiment was reflected throughout the WA ANM in early 2011 (e.g. interview with Joy on 20th March 2011, Chernobyl Day Remembrance activities on 26th April 2011), based on the Indigenous belief that communities need to take responsibility for their own resources and the impact these may have on other people's lives. In contrast to the well-resourced corporate mining sector with its trained communication staff and existing media relationships, anti-nuclear activists appeared to be paralysed by the gravity of the events unfolding in Fukushima, overwhelmed by feelings of sympathy for the Japanese victims and under shock that their worst prophecy (i.e. a major nuclear disaster that raises the profile of the dangers associated with nuclear energy) had in fact become true. A number of participants failed to attend pre-arranged interviews and research meetings during this time, as their lives appeared to be taken over by the events in Japan. Lacking resources and emotional capacity, the WA ANM resorted to letting the events speak for themselves. From the activist perspective, uranium is Australia's asbestos of the 21st century (Shareholder opposition to BHP's uranium mining projects, 2011; The Queensland and Northern Territory Branch of the Electrical Trades Union (ETU), 2010; 'Uranium is the new asbestos': union ban on nuclear work, 2010), implying serious long-term health and environmental risks that outweigh any short-term economic benefits and increases in employment opportunities.

Findings thus indicate that what is frequently referred to as the activist-organisation relationship in the existing literature, is in reality marked by irreconcilable differences. Modern corporations exist for one purpose alone: to maximise profit. Hence, unless this objective is challenged, mining corporations have no incentive to engage with Indigenous communities or WA ANM activists. Moreover, anti-nuclear activists see the world in black and white terms. There is no room for the compromise suggested by PR scholars. Activists are fundamentally opposed to the mining of uranium, the generation of nuclear power and the use of nuclear

weapons, which leaves no room for negotiations or a common ground. As a result, neither party is interested in entering into even a minimal compromise.

As Dutta indicates, corporate responsibility and engagement exercises “emerge as sites of co-opting community resistance through manipulative practices that give the appearance of dialogue” (Dutta, 2011, p. 241). Throughout this study the threat of what Holtzhausen (2007) refers to as unwillingly being co-opted into supporting organisational practices, which individuals opposed in the first place, was one of activists’ biggest concerns. Communication scholars Ganesh and Zoller (2012) identify three useful positions on dialogue and their implication for understanding activism and social change: collaboration, co-optation and agonism. Whilst WA ANM activists are highly supportive of an agonistic approach to dialogue, which enables authority to be challenged and multiple opinions to be freely expressed, they avoid the search for a ‘common ground’, which they associate with the reinforcement of existing power relationships and misleading practices. To minimise this risk, the WA ANM often deliberately avoided direct engagement with industry representatives as part of formalised processes. This differentiates the movement clearly from other activist groups, in particular established not-for-profit organisations²³. From the WA ANM perspective, corporate donations or the suggestion of a compromise alone were perceived as “selling out” (interview with Donna on 17th May 2011, interview with Alicia on 28th February 2011, interview with Johnno on 3rd May 2011 and interview with Joy on 29th September 2000).

Power games: Mining corporations’ agenda setting power

WA ANM activists were conscious of the disparity in the distribution of power between the State’s mining corporations and the WA community, which included active citizens like themselves. Study participants frequently commented that the mining and resources sector influenced the Australian media and used its agenda setting power to reinforce its own standing and symbolic capital. Johnno explained:

They’ve got the media on side so much...Like Mr Rudd²⁴ trying to introduce that super-profits tax. [...] I think they’ve [the resources companies] got such a sort of

²³ For example, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) is known for a reliance on industry funding and its preparedness to enter partnerships and collaborations with corporations (R. Burton, 2008; J. Taylor, 2006), which it justifies in exchange for the opportunity to participate in a change process (interview with Peter on 11th March 2009).

²⁴ Former Prime Minister, see Chapter 2.

economic stranglehold on our economy that it's very hard to oppose them. (Johnno, interview, 5th April 2011)

During the course of this study the resources sector was held responsible for the de-seating of a first-term prime minister and the active shaping of policies to suit their own bottom line.

[Kevin Rudd] wanted to do something nobody had really done before and that was tax the resource industry probably what they should have been paying if not more, and that was too much change. I think that's why they got rid of him; it was too much too quick, and he didn't talk to enough people about it. They didn't have a chance to lobby him and talk him down before he hit the ground running with it (Alycia, interview, 28th February 2011).

The sector successfully lobbied against the so-called Resource Super Profit Tax, which was followed by its active involvement in the watering down of the newly introduced Minerals Resource Rent Tax, with the aid of traditional lobbying, proactive media relations and a multi-billion dollar advertising campaign (e.g. Murphy, 2010b) (see Chapter 2, p. 43). Most importantly, however, the WA ANM raised concerns about the amount of power and influence the industry wields within the political sphere (or in Bourdieu's terms: field). Governments represent a key stakeholder for the industry as they are effectively the only authority that can sanction or prevent the mining of uranium in Western Australia. By definition, politicians are elected representatives of the community, thus they represent the interest of the country's citizens or, more precisely, their local constituents. However, activists argued that not residents but mining corporations effectively determined priorities and controlled the country's political agenda, as they pressure and manipulate governments at a local, State and Federal level. The result was perceived as having a detrimental impact on democratic decision making, as "it's not elected governments that run the place, it's the big corporations" (Anna, interview, 12th April 2011) and "the government is run by mining companies, it's not the other way round" (Donna, interview, 5th May 2011). This interpretation of the Western Australian state of affairs was further confirmed in a recent three-part documentary that investigated the role and influence of the mining industry over the past century (SBS, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c) and concluded that the industry lobby actively influences the political agenda.

Activists perceived this large share of power and access to political decision making processes as alarming and dangerous, as most Australian citizens were assumed to

be largely unaware of the wide-reaching nature of the mining and resources industry's influence:

I think people don't realise how powerful corporations are. They're more powerful than governments. They affect policy, they affect legislation, they affect who's our leadership, they have billions and billions of dollars and generate billions of dollars of profit and generate money into the economy, which is why they have power. So until we cost them money I don't think they give a fuck what we do. (Alycia, interview, 28th February 2011)

Activists believed that, influenced by the corporate mining agenda, governments value economic benefits ahead of the environment, consequently dismissing any concerns and reservations raised by the WA ANM, affiliates and the Australian Greens:

Norman Moore, who represented the environment with the government at the time, just stood up and said we can't afford to delay mining of uranium any longer. So many jobs are going to depend on it and so much revenue is going to depend on it, end of story. (Johno, interview, 3rd March 2011)

The WA ANM was particularly concerned about governments' apparent valuing of short-term economic gain ahead of long term environmental damage and the sustainability of the Australian lifestyle. With a view based on BHP Billiton's Olympic Dam operation²⁵, Jo explained:

It's [uranium mining] just a huge water guzzler and now they're trying to expand the size of it. They know they can't take any more out of the Great Artesian Bore because already some of the little mound springs near there have dried up. There's been a consequence. So they're now talking about a desalination plant in Spencer Gulf and to take water 500 kilometres from a desalination plant. Now a desalination plant if, you know, I don't like desal plants at all because they affect the sea grasses and so on and then they cost a lot of power to generate the water as well. We should be doing conservation and we should be trying to mitigate climate change so that we can learn to live with less water and manage it better. (Joy, interview, 15th March 2011)

Activists believed that essentially "it's all about the money" (Joy, interview, 15th March 2011), that politicians and the industry are "caught in a fantasy that this [uranium mining] is going to be the next gold rush" (Jay, interview, 13th May 2011)

²⁵ Based in South Australia, Olympic Dam has the largest known single deposit of uranium in the world. See Chapter 2, page 23.

and that a move towards uranium mining is essentially short sighted and not in the interest of local citizens, who contrary to promises of employment opportunities, would not benefit from the newly generated wealth:

There's no proof in the world that uranium is making communities rich, that's just a whole lot of crap, and probably the only people who are getting rich off it are the executive directors of the mining companies. (Donna, interview, 5th May 2011)

The above quotes and insights into the WA ANM's perception of the WA state of affairs during the early 2010s further emphasise how the so called activist-corporation relationship is characterised by irreconcilable differences and opposing worldviews, that make cooperation, engagement and partnerships not only undesirable, but essentially impossible.

Anti-nuclear activists perceived it as their responsibility to publicly highlight and question mining corporations' agenda setting powers, which enable them to influence the political agenda to their (economic) advantage, whilst community voices went largely unheard and were instead continuously marginalised.

In summary, based on my findings I challenge the notion that activists and corporations should, or do negotiate a compromise, as has traditionally been recommended in the public relations literature. Furthermore, I contest the idea that a relationship exists between activist organisations, such as the WA ANM, and corporations. This so called 'relationship', which is frequently referred to in the existing PR literature (see page 66), is in reality characterised by irreconcilable differences and opposing worldviews. This is supported by the findings of Weaver (2010) and Stokes and Rubins (2010), who observe that a compromise essentially does not appeal to activist groups who are entirely opposed to a business proposition or policy decision. WA ANM activists challenge the State's and Federal Government's pro-industry mindset and the commercialisation of natural assets. Their role as challenger is investigated in more detail in Chapter 8. They challenge not only mining corporations, as assumed in the PR literature, also but target key stakeholder groups, as I discuss over the following paragraphs.

Anti-nuclear activism in action

During the course of this study, two communication campaign examples stood out based on their (media) profile and strategic nature; namely Planting Seeds of Doubt (amongst shareholders) and Undermining the Uranium Mining Industry. The latter was predominantly targeted at the State Government. However, it is important to

note that although both can be described as examples of strategic communication, the actual planning process relied on a very small number of individuals, predominantly consisting of the current Uraniumfree Advocates, employed by the Conservation Council²⁶, and one or two representatives of ANAWA. Much of the background planning happened as part of the Undermining the Uranium Mining Industry working party meetings and was heavily based on past activist experiences, as well as existing skill sets and preferences amongst the WA ANM. The actual implementation, however, relied on the wider movement and a broader skills-set, as volunteered on an availability and perceived urgency basis by individual activists. Hence, although a broad communications strategy may have existed throughout and even beyond the data collection period, the actual implementation and execution varied over time, depending on activist availability, individual action organisers and personal aptitudes. This understanding emerged primarily out of my exposure as participant observant, supported by insights gleaned from the semi-structured interviews.

Planting seeds of doubt (amongst shareholders)

The two major variables determining the profitability of mining projects are commodity prices and shareholder investment/ demand. As discussed earlier in the Background Chapter (Chapter 2), the record spot price for uranium ore in 2007 prompted a flurry of investment and a record number of exploration applications in Western Australia, as mining companies set out to pre-empt the reversal of the ban on uranium mining in late 2008. However, diversification in resources does not come without associated risks, particularly as corporations need to raise further capital to cover extensive establishment costs. According to Australian Bureau of Statistic figures, expenditure in WA uranium exploration soared from \$28 million to \$40 million within the 18 months until March 2010 (M. Bennett, 2010). Shareholder investment, trust and support are particularly crucial during these times of major expansion and investment. The spike in uranium prices and the reversal of the ban coincided with the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), as corporations sought opportunities to diversify and counter sharp decreases in share values. As share markets around the world lost almost half their value over a 12 months period, Australia's self-funded retirees were particularly affected, many being forced to delay retirement plans (Humpel, O'Loughlin, Snoke, & Kendig, 2010). This

²⁶ As stated in Chapter 2 (Background), the Advocate changed between the formative study and the main data collection. Please see the movement charts in appendix 10.1 – 10.4

experience undermined the confidence of shareholders and prompted many to look for new investment opportunities to retrieve losses. Corporations with uranium mining interests in WA used the unusual market situation to their advantage and positioned upcoming projects as a unique investment opportunity, promoting high return on investment. However, in the absence of mining and in some cases even exploration leases, uranium investors were essentially buying shares in projects that were solely based on corporations' internal estimates and predictions. As such, they were buying an intangible good, with share prices set by demand and fuelled by intensive corporate PR efforts. However, corporate PR teams not only promoted upcoming mining projects, but also ran a high profile media, public commentary and lobbying campaign, in which they argued in favour of the introduction of nuclear energy in Australia, (Jerga, 2011a; Nason, 2010; Trenwith, 2011), thereby adding to the speculation around the future of uranium and encouraging further investment. Investor confidence was further strengthened as a result of strong support from the Federal Resources Minister, who continued to promote uranium mining as a valued contributor to the Australian economy (Jerga, 2011c) during the aftermath of the Fukushima reactor meltdown.

This brief overview highlights the challenges for the WA ANM during the course of this study. Whilst the mining industry drew on extensive in-house PR expertise, supported by project-based communications consultants, the WA ANM relied on volunteer support. As uranium miners benefited from extensive (financial) resources and endorsement by the State and Federal Governments, activists commenced their campaign from a resource-poor and powerless position. Finally, from the shareholder's perspective, shares in uranium projects are largely an investment decision. As mine sites are located in the West Australian outback, hundreds of kilometres from the nearest major settlement, investors tend to be physically and emotionally disengaged. The WA ANM's key challenge was to overcome personal detachment and make health, environmental and social impacts of the operations relevant to investors.

Noticeably, although shareholder engagement was rarely mentioned unprompted in interviews with WA ANM activists, it emerged as a key campaign strategy during the observation phase of this project. The data indicate that references to pressuring investors and the commitment to what activists' referred to as "planting seeds of doubt" were not intentionally omitted by activists. This is a reflection of the wide range of issues and projects activists were involved in, which might occasionally make it challenging to identify the underlying strategy beyond the focus on one

particular public action, such as a protest at a mining corporation's Annual General Meeting. However, the omission in itself may be indicative of individual activists' task-based approach to and frequently impromptu involvement in the anti-uranium campaign. Similarly, the WA ANM's positive experience and results based on the undermining of confidence in a range of mining projects over the past decades (e.g. see the reference to the Jabiluka Campaign in Chapter 2, page 29) may have resulted in the unconscious—as opposed to strategic or carefully planned—adoption of investor targeted strategies and initiatives.

The WA ANM worked under the assumption that the majority of uranium investors were not attracted based on an affinity with a particular commodity, but by the promise of a high return on investment (ROI). Investors may have therefore largely failed to consider ethical, social and environmental implications. Activists' aim was consequently to highlight uranium mining as distinct from other types of mining, by emphasising health concerns (e.g. labelling uranium as “the new asbestos”²⁷ (interview with Jay, 13th May 2013, participation observation at planning weekend, 19th-20th February 2011)) and dispelling the “myth” of a nuclear renaissance (interview with Alycia, 28th February 2011, participant observation at BUMP planning meetings, January – June 2011, Scott Ludlam quoted in M. Bennett, 2010). Although individual activists' attitudes may vary, the WA ANM's position was not opposed to mining in general, but specifically to the mining of uranium.

During the course of this study I participated in a number of shareholder targeted actions that coincided with corporations' Annual General Meetings. Most notably, these included an action outside the offices of BHP Billiton, coinciding with its interstate 2010 AGM and peaceful protests outside the 2011 BHP Billiton AGM in Perth. However, shareholders of smaller mining corporations were equally targeted, either directly, such as the 2010 Paladin AGM at the Royal Perth Yacht Club, or indirectly, via actions of civil disobedience that coincided with official proceedings in other cities. Some movement representatives, usually those in formalised positions (e.g. the Conservation Council's Uraniumfree Advocate) travelled to major interstate AGMs. However, despite their paid capacity, they frequently relied on donations and

²⁷ Asbestos is a fibrous mineral that was widely used in Australia in the 20th century for many industrial and domestic applications. The mineral also represented a major income stream during particularly the first half of the 20th century. The mineral was mined in Western Australian open cut mines until the town of Wittenoom was closed down in the 1960s due to unprofitability and growing health concerns associated in particular with blue asbestos. Inhalation of asbestos fibres has been shown to lead to a number of serious health risks, including asbestosis and the cancer mesothelioma. As these can take a number of decades to develop, the Australian Government expects that “the effects on the Australian community of exposure to asbestos will continue to increase into the 21st Century” (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2013).

self-funded at least some elements of the trip, including taking annual leave to attend. Activist tactics that supported AGM actions included street theatre with a strong emphasis on dress up and humour, banners to raise attention among passers-by, and the distribution of information flyers and “Alternative Annual Reports” that highlighted environmental and social impacts, and which contrasted with the economic focus of corporation’s original documents (for example: BHP Billiton Watch, 2011; bhpbilliton undermining the future, 2010; Toro Watch, 2012a). These reports were produced and shared on a national, and sometimes international, level. They drew on global expertise (cultural capital) and were shared amongst likeminded groups and individual activists. Related groups, such as the Medical Association for Prevention of War (2011), provided their public support and thereby added an additional layer of authority, as well as cultural and social capital (e.g. Toro Watch, 2012b). One of the most visible shareholder actions during this study took place outside the 2010 BHP Billiton AGM at the Perth Convention Centre on 16th November. There were two key reasons behind the enlarged presence of activists and the resulting media coverage. Firstly, the AGM took place in Perth (allowing easy access). Secondly, BHP Billiton is a high profile uranium exporter internationally and particularly in Australia, which at the time had major plans for expansion in both South and Western Australia. It therefore was considered to be an important and high profile target. The following paragraphs summarise the activities on that day (based on observation notes).

Activists took a two-pronged approach to what is referred to amongst WA ANM community as “planting seeds of doubt”. With limited media contacts and a lack of interest from business journalists to cover the activist perspective, much of the WA ANM’s activities concentrated on Annual General Meetings (AGMs). With the help of proxy votes, a small number of activists participated in the AGM, where they posed well-prepared and targeted queries during question time. Here, the main focus was not on challenging the corporations’ leadership team, but rather on highlighting areas of concern to the five hundred shareholders in the room (Klinger, 2010), with the ultimate aim of encouraging a revision of investment portfolios on the basis of either ethical or financial considerations. Here, “seeds of doubt” were planted in the minds of shareholders through the provision of information, in the form of statistics, and/or via personal stories. The consequences of the planting of a ‘small’ idea or piece of information could potentially result in a delay to government approvals for the project and possibly even bring about changes in legislation, based on community opposition. However, doubt may also emerge as a result of

challenging personal values, by providing additional information and alternative perspectives; a strategy employed by activists and concerned (Indigenous) community members. Participation in the formal proceedings was limited to high(er) profile activists with extensive experience. The involvement of traditional owners added additional credibility to the WA ANM's cause, by drawing on the Indigenous community's extensive cultural (i.e. first-hand, extensive knowledge of the land that pre-dates European settlement and experience with previous mining projects), social (i.e. size of the movement and its networks, as well as the associated skills and knowledge) and hence symbolic capital (i.e. the respect shown to the individual traditional owner and the consequent increase in legitimacy of the movement as a whole). However, whilst activists' knowledge and experience provided an advantage to the movement in having its voice heard in a business environment, the existence of a prominent profile may prevent individuals from being selected to ask a question in the first place. Well aware of their activist identity and corporations' perception of their activities, WA ANM representatives consciously dressed in business attire in order to blend into the AGM audience. In addition, they operated as individuals, as opposed to remaining within the relative safety of a physical group. Posing a question in front of hundreds of investors, and challenging the status quo, thus became a very personal and confronting commitment.

As core activists reported back on the progress made during the formal shareholder procedures via mobile phones and social media, a larger group of activists and supporters gathered outside the AGM, entertained with live music, speakers, and a barbeque. The gathering of individuals, attired in colourful campaign t-shirts, and supported by banners as well as first-hand accounts by traditional owners who were faced with the prospect of a uranium mine in close proximity to their community, aided in solidifying bonding social capital across the WA ANM and its affiliated groups. However, its primary objective was to "prick shareholders' conscience" (interview with Alycia, 28th February 2011), consequently encouraging investors to review the types of business ventures they supported and invested in. The visually displayed social capital of the WA ANM, combined with the cultural capital of the first-hand accounts, clearly communicated "opposition" and "risk" to shareholders as they entered and exited the venue, planting further "seeds of doubt".

The profile of the Annual General Meeting, coupled with the symbolic capital of BHP Billiton as one of the world's major mining corporations and most recognisable brands, further provided WA ANM activists with a rare opportunity to gain visibility and media attention. The half-day long activities inside and outside the BHP AGM

resulted in extensive media coverage (e.g. AAP, 2010c; ABC Radio Australia, 2010; ABC Rural, 2010; Burrell, 2010; L. Jones, 2010; Klinger, 2010; Lawson, 2010; Murphy, 2010a), which extended the WA ANM's reach and positively impacted on anti-nuclear activists' symbolic capital. The majority of coverage appeared in the business sections. It was thus focused on the factual reporting of concerns raised and the level of opposition encountered by investors on the day, as opposed to questioning the legitimacy of the movement as is common in the general news sections. This coverage contrasts with my earlier findings regarding the self-serving nature of the West Australian media. However, this reasonably neutral reporting about activist concerns remains an isolated incident.

To summarise, planting seeds of doubt about the benefits and sustainability of both uranium mining and nuclear energy was a common and highly successful communications strategy used by anti-nuclear activists, with which they did not target the actual mining companies, but existing and potential investors. This key strategy amongst anti-nuclear activists was so successful that the Federal Government publicly criticised the WA ANM and its affiliates for creating "investment insecurity" (Kelly, 2010). The success of their actions may have taken advantage of the public profile and symbolic capital of those corporations whose license to operate they challenged. However, direct interaction with corporate representatives was minimal, as the focus was on influencing the key stakeholders of these organisations; in this, case existing and potential investors.

As they were seeking to influence investment decisions, it may be argued that WA ANM activists were operating in some form of a public relations role. However, contrary to the actions of corporate PR departments, they did not encourage investment but instead urged existing and potential investors to examine the personal values and priorities that drive those investment decisions. Activists set out to undermine, rather than foster, trust in the long-term financial health of the business venture. In contrast with the goals of corporations for whom PR professionals operate, there were no personal benefits or commercial advantages to be gained for WA ANM activists from the buying or selling of uranium shares. As such, the data suggest that activists are driven by a desire to inform and challenge public discourse. I therefore argue that ultimately anti-nuclear activists' focus is not on the actions and profitability of individual organisations, but on the legacy their actions would leave for future generations.

Industry representatives, governments and even the community may perceive the WA ANM as a homogenous group. However, the BHP AGM case study illustrates that activists' involvement is very individualistic and personal, as action is driven not by the collective, but the individual activist, whose involvement requires a personal and often confronting commitment to the activist cause.

Undermining the uranium mining agenda

As earlier argued with regard to the views held by corporations, findings indicate that WA ANM activists believed that politicians, and in particular the neoliberal State Government, dismissed the movement's symbolic capital as too insignificant to warrant meaningful engagement (Alycia, interview, 28th February 2011, interview with Martin, 3th May 2011), particularly when compared to the vast symbolic capital held by the mining and resources sector. Activists therefore sought to influence decision-makers by mobilising the wider (WA) community. The main strategy employed for this was to "Undermine the U-Mining Agenda", which will be discussed in detail over the following paragraphs.

Federal and in particular State Government endorsement and support are necessary for uranium mining project approvals and ongoing viability. Hence, the WA mining and resources industry had invested heavily in political lobbying campaigns and worked closely with relevant ministers and the State Premier to secure ongoing cooperation and support. In return, mining royalties represent a major income stream for the State Government. For example, in 2010/2011 the Department of Mines and Petroleum collected more than \$4.9 Billion in royalties (as opposed to taxation of company income) from mineral and petroleum producers in Western Australia (Department of Mines and Petroleum, 2012). These figures emphasise the State's dependency on mining income and consequently the close relationship, if not dependency, between politicians and the energy and resources sector.

Hence, aside from diverting investor interests, the movement's second major objective was to influence the political agenda and decision making by "undermining the uranium mining industry's agenda" (interview with Joy, 29th September 2009, interview with Kay, 30th September 2009, interview with Nadia, 28th April 2009, interview with Verity, 28th April 2011). Activists' ultimate goal was to permanently prevent the mining of uranium ore by reinstating a state-wide ban (see Chapter 2).

The WA ANM has extensive experience with and knowledge of political processes. Activists were consequently aware that the movement's symbolic capital and thus power, as perceived by the WA government, were limited. Politicians are directed and motivated by their constituents' interests and concerns, particularly around election time. Activists' aim was therefore to educate and empower the community to take action at a local, grassroots level in order to challenge current legislation (interview with Julie, 15th April 2011). They did this by challenging the community's perception of the mining industry as a benefactor of the State and the country as a whole by directing the focus and attention away from high paying jobs and tax contributions and onto (long-term) social, environmental and health factors (see e.g. ABC News, 2009; ABC Radio Australia, 2010; Robson, 2011). Grassroots mobilisation was encouraged and facilitated with a range of tactics: the collection of signatures and online petitions, to which community members could add their personal comments and messages; the distribution of campaign postcards addressed to the Premier, the local MP or the Environment Minister; information sessions and public debates, which provided insights into the pro-uranium claims as well as the movement's counter-arguments, regular vigils for nuclear 'victims' in the Perth city centre and public events around anniversaries of major nuclear incidences. There were also continuous calls for individuals to write to the State newspaper and ring their local Member of Parliament to voice their concerns.

The "Breakfast at Barnett's" action, which was discussed earlier (see Chapter 6, page 175), is an example of a good humoured public action that aided the movement in creating bonding social capital, but simultaneously set out to educate the community. Notably, by the end of the primary data collection phase and after around six months' of protest, the State Premier had failed to acknowledge the regular gathering of protesters outside his office. However, the function and potential of the weekly protests reached well beyond the physical assembly of a small number of committed anti-nuclear activists. Firstly, the regular protest presence provided individuals and likeminded groups with a public platform (Minutes from 1st March 2011 BUMP Action Meeting), an opportunity to have their voice heard, and increased social capital to undermine the existing State Government. Consequently, the 100 weeks of protest in the lead up to the March 2013 State Election became about much more than opposition to uranium mining. Instead, protesters questioned the industry-centric agenda of the current government and challenged it to take environmental concerns seriously, or alternatively risk defeat in the upcoming election. Secondly, the persistent public

display of discontent and the highlighting of issues challenged passing community members to re-assess their own priorities and encouraged them to take action accordingly. This included becoming better informed about issues raised (including uranium mining), and voicing their concerns or participating in future public actions. On its own, the WA ANM had very limited opportunities to bring about change. However, with the support – and social capital – of connected individuals and the wider community, it could potentially facilitate radical change, including a change in government, which would ultimately undermine the existing power of the (uranium) mining industry.

During the course of this study, the new WA Uraniumfree Advocate was proactive in expanding the wider support base. She did this by creating a three-tiered information channel. Firstly, by growing the number of Twitter followers and in particular Facebook “friends” of the “Uraniumfree WA” (Uraniumfree WA, 2011b) account from a few hundred to over 4000, she ensured that the WA ANM could maintain a steady flow of news updates and action alerts to interested individuals and their “friends”. The implied challenge in this context is that it would be impossible to determine if all Uraniumfree WA “friends” are genuine supporters of the movement and not what activists label “industry spies”. However, I argue that the true intentions of subscribers are largely irrelevant. Whilst the planning of public disobedience actions was limited to a small group of continuously changing activists, the focus of the online forum had been on sharing news items, updates, public action alerts (such as scheduled protests) and photos of recent events in order to highlight the breadth, visibility and knowledge (cultural capital) of the movement to primarily supporters, but also to potential opponents and critics. Subscribers were therefore provided with industry intelligence, as well as opportunities to become more involved if they chose to. By choosing to become a “friend” of Uraniumfree WA, they thus effectively acquired membership of the virtual extension of the activist group. Secondly, in addition to social media activities, the WA Uraniumfree Advocate actively grew an email database of current and past anti-nuclear supporters, to which a weekly update of actions and a detailed overview of related local and international news coverage was distributed. Media coverage was conveniently ranked based on perceived importance and news value based on a star-system. Finally, the Uraniumfree Advocate created a “rapid response team” by collating mobile numbers of trusted, active, civil disobedience subscribed activists, who could be motivated urgently if the opportunity or need for a public action should arise.

To summarise, the WA ANM was aware of its limited symbolic capital within the mining and resource context and even the broader, West Australian habitus. During the course of this study, mining corporations were actively influencing the state and federal political agenda to further their own economic interests, which in turn adversely impacted on anti-nuclear activists' access to and influence on legislative decision makers. In order to bring about change, the WA ANM set out to undermine the uranium mining agenda by publicly challenging the Liberal State Government's industry-centric agenda and encouraging citizens to become informed, voice their concerns and take action. This action took place at an individual level, as well as at a macro organisational level. A politician's future depends on the endorsement by his or her constituents, who ultimately have the power to counteract the uranium mining lobby's influence and force a change in legislation if uranium mining is perceived as a pertinent, election deciding issue. By fostering public anti-uranium mining sentiment and criticism of the incumbent government via educational tactics and the challenging of the status quo, the WA ANM increased its social capital and ultimately provided the community with the means and mechanisms to express their dissatisfaction and concerns in a way that had the potential to bring about legislative change. In return, the WA ANM was able to grow its social capital, both physically, as represented by attendance at public events, as well as qualitatively, as demonstrated in the subject specific knowledge and skills displayed by individual activists and supporters.

Activists as facilitators of change

This study has highlighted that in contrast to the largely conceptual understanding of the activist-corporation relationship in traditional PR literature, in reality the engagement between organisations and social movements, like the WA ANM, is minimal. In the words of Dozier and Lauzen (2000), the movement may lack "the clout—the deep pockets to carve out a position in the win-win zone" (p. 12). However, findings also highlight that anti-nuclear activists did not perceive direct engagement with corporate mining representatives as an effective strategy. Throughout this study, WA ANM activists did not seek a compromise with uranium mining corporations, nor did they engage in any form of negotiation, cooperation or consultation.

It could be argued that despite their moderate cultural capital and more extensive social capital, anti-nuclear activists were in no position to compete with the vast economic capital and symbolic power of the uranium mining industry. Their lack of

(financial and symbolic) power within the mining and resources context (or “field”, in Bourdieu’s terms), made it impossible for the WA ANM to enter any direct, meaningful negotiations. Activists therefore opted for a reverse strategy. By drawing on the Planting Seeds of Doubt and Undermining the Uranium Mining strategies the WA ANM challenged the industry’s position of power and effectively contested mining corporations’ authority to construct reality and influence the (West) Australian agenda. Activists targeted corporations’ key stakeholders, i.e. entities that are recognised for their field specific influence and power. As detailed above, these include governments and politicians, who hold the legislative power to limit mining operations, and shareholders, who control the economic health and viability of individual mining companies. In the absence of sufficient movement or activist group specific capital, the WA ANM set out to bring about change by educating, empowering and motivating the wider community to engage with the anti-nuclear topic, hence creating sufficient groundswell and anti-nuclear affiliated social capital to initiate action against uranium mining. This process is illustrated in figure 7.3 below:

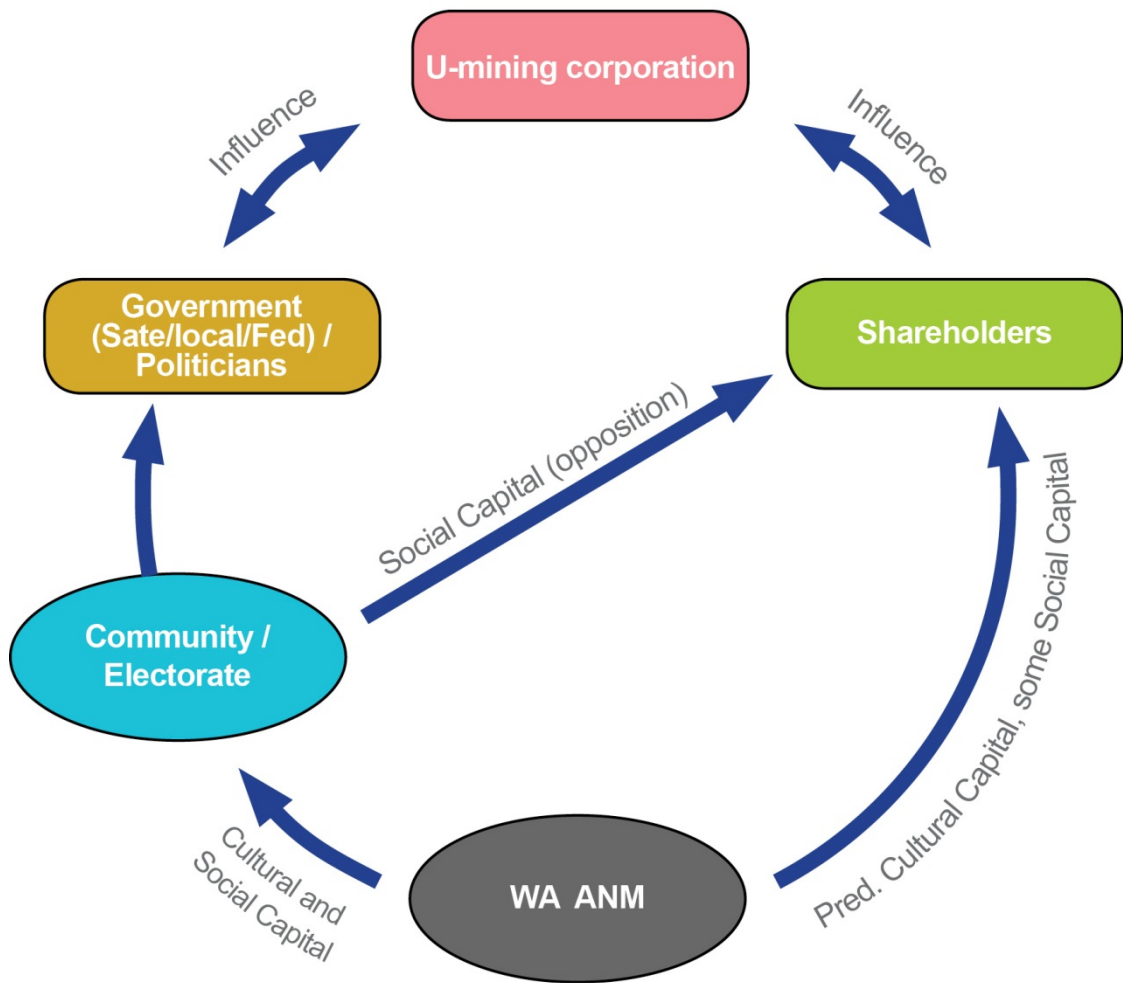


Figure 7.3: The activism influence flow

The WA ANM (displayed at the bottom of Figure 7.3) consists of a limited number of activists from different backgrounds, representing various groups, with the collective aim to permanently prohibit the mining of uranium and its exportation from Western Australia. This current campaign focus is philosophically linked to opposition to nuclear power and weapons. However, alone, the collective lacks the required cultural, social and economic capital to bring about the desired change. From the corporate uranium mining perspective (represented at the top of Figure 7.3) the movement lacks the sufficient symbolic capital and power to influence business outcomes to warrant meaningful engagement. Simultaneously, findings indicate that anti-nuclear activists do not seek, and in some cases even actively avoid, consultation by corporate representatives. Hence, the space between the WA ANM and uranium mining corporations is notably devoid of any indication representing meaningful communication or engagement. Instead, anti-nuclear activists seek to influence change via two major strategies.

Firstly, illustrated in the series of arrows on the left hand side of the figure, activists draw on their internalised, subject specific cultural capital and seek to educate the wider community about the risks associated with the mining, exportation of and long-term exposure to uranium ore. In doing so, they aid individual community members in building their own knowledge, motivate them to challenge the status quo, and encourage them to conduct further research for their own benefits, thus building the total cultural capital available to the movement. By drawing on their existing social capital, activists utilise available resources and networks to disseminate their knowledge, and highlight reputable individuals within their network to add further credibility to their messages (e.g. medical professionals). As community members engage with the topic of uranium mining and the nuclear cycle, their existing belief systems are challenged. Some may outright dismiss the information provided by the WA ANM, instead subscribing to the economy-centric view reinforced by the mining industry, the State Government and the Australian mainstream media. Others might seek out more information or even decide to support the anti-uranium stance, by discussing the topic with friends and family, signing a petition, attending an event or writing a letter to the local newspaper. Some community members may officially join the movement by donating money or other personal resources (such as time, knowledge, skills). However, by engaging with the information provided and (to various levels) opposing the mining of uranium in Western Australia, the social capital of the WA ANM expands—both quantitatively (more supporters of the anti-nuclear stance) and qualitatively (a greater pool of contacts, skills and resources to draw on). Only by engaging the community is the WA ANM able to increase its symbolic capital and power sufficiently to be recognised by governments at a local, State and Federal level. Due to its large dependence on the wider community to cultivate sufficient capital, I argue that at this stage the issue is no longer limited to the movement itself, but instead owned and driven by an engaged community. As the issue gains momentum and individuality at a grassroots level, the WA ANM is not in control of the campaign or any communication, in the same way as a corporate PR department.

In drawing on their extensive cultural capital within the political field, i.e. understanding of political processes and decision makers, the WA ANM encourages individuals, community and interest groups to discuss their opposition to uranium mining and associated concerns with their local political representatives. Politicians in democratic societies rely on their electorate to gain or maintain power. As a result, they are obliged to take note of and respond to major community concerns. If

opposition to uranium mining and export gains sufficient momentum and groundswell, individual representatives and eventually entire political parties will be obliged to respond by confirming their party's position, reassuring their electorate and potentially introducing legislative changes, which have the power to reinstate a ban on uranium mining.

The WA ANM is therefore not the change agent, but a facilitator of change. By providing the wider community with issue specific information and alternative knowledge (e.g. through educational street theatre, information pamphlets, websites, etc.), tools to express their views (e.g. petitions to sign, postcards to send to their local MP, etc.) and platforms to meet likeminded people (e.g. public protests, information events, non-violence direct action workshops etc.), anti-nuclear activists enable community members to become engaged and influence democratic change within their region (and beyond).

Secondly, anti-nuclear activists may simultaneously seek to influence another key corporate stakeholder group, displayed on the right hand side of Figure 7.3. In drawing on their existing cultural capital (knowledge), activists challenge existing and potential shareholders' investment decisions. They do so by encouraging them to consider social, health and environmental considerations beyond the narrow focus on return on investment. Furthermore, they plant seeds of doubt about the long-term economic benefits associated with uranium ore. Activists draw on their social capital, i.e. existing networks and affiliates, to gain access to shareholders, as well as relevant knowledge and expertise of the finance and investment field. Furthermore, community support for a ban on uranium mining, i.e. quantitatively increased social capital in the form of public opposition (e.g. protests outside AGMs), may result in further insecurity amongst existing and potential investors regarding the long term value of uranium ore shares. This is displayed via the diagonal arrow in Illustration 7.3.

Again, the WA ANM is not the actual agent of change, but a facilitator. By challenging shareholders' belief systems and priorities, they create uncertainty and doubt, which they hope will negatively impact on investment decisions and thus decrease the viability of uranium ore projects. It is important to note that the "influence arrows" between uranium mining corporations and shareholders on the right hand side, as well as governments on the left hand side, operate both ways. Corporations' business decisions are influenced by legislative changes and shareholder pressure. However, equally, corporations attempt to actively influence

the political agenda to their favour, as well as seek to reassure shareholders to maximise support and profitability. As the media presence is rather limited within the Australian context, I have deliberately omitted the influence of the media in Illustration 7.3.

To summarise, the WA ANM lacks the economic and symbolic capital and power to generate change. However, anti-nuclear activists possess sufficient social and cultural capital to facilitate change by challenging the community's and shareholders' priorities and belief systems. For any lasting change to occur, activists like the WA ANM require sufficient community support for their adopted issue. Based on these findings, I question if WA ANM activists do in fact challenge an individual corporation's license to operate, or if their objective and focus is much broader. If activists' motivation is to facilitate change within society, as opposed to interest-motivated restrictions imposed on a given corporation, the lack of economic capital becomes irrelevant as activists do not seek, nor require, any engagement with corporations and their representatives. This idea, the activist identity and their perceived role in society, is examined in more detail in the following chapter (Chapter 8).

I argue that grassroots movements like the WA ANM recognise the limitations of alternative viewpoints, such as their own. Activists in this study were conscious that the political sphere only recognises and addresses an issue if there is sufficient groundswell support that forces politicians to take a public position and possibly even develop a corresponding policy, with the ultimate aim of gaining or maintaining a position of power. As such, activists' role in society is much broader than the highlighting of an issue that is close to their heart, or even the commitment to provide alternative viewpoints. Instead, activists ensure the existence of an engaged society. By challenging conventions and engrained belief systems, they encourage the development of informed and engaged citizens, who are active participants in democratic processes.

Beyond the manufacturing of consent

As activists do not possess the capital, visibility and power to directly generate change, I question the importance of individual campaign successes. Over its many years of operation, the WA ANM has achieved a number of successes, most notably ensuring the continued absence of nuclear power and uranium mining in Western Australia. During the course of this study it succeeded once again in

elevating uranium mining to an election issue, securing a commitment by the West Australian Labor Party to reinstate the ban that was overturned in 2008 (Evans, 2011). Activists further celebrated the reversal of BHP's expansion plans at its Olympic Dam mine (BHP shelves Olympic Dam as profit falls a third, 2012). However, anti-nuclear activists were conscious of how short-lived some of these successes could be (e.g. interview with Alycia, 28th February 2011, interview with Nadia, 28th April 2009, interview with Martin, 4th May 2011). Following a change in leadership, the WA Labor Party subsequently revised its commitment to a ban on new, but not existing or already approved, uranium mines (McGowan, 2012). At the same time, activists were constantly challenged by an openly pro-uranium mining Federal Environment Minister (Jerga, 2011c), Queensland reversed its ban on uranium mining in 2012 (Tlozek & Smith, 2012) and activists had to adapt to the emergence of a junior mining company that took over BHP's Yeelirrie operation (Burrell, 2012).

From a PR perspective, the WA ANM has not always been strategic, failing to maximise on many opportunities to raise its profile and opposition to uranium mining. Resource restrictions limit its strategic capabilities, as do competing objectives, such as ensuring the existence of sufficient bonding capital and the (mental) wellbeing of activists. Other, related activist campaigns, such as Save the Kimberley and opposition to "Fracking"²⁸ further reduced the movements' resources. The movement also failed to maximise opportunities emerging as a result of international events, largely due to emotive and passionate reasons. For example, when in March 2011 Japan's Fukushima Daiichi suffered major damage, first from an earthquake and then from the subsequent tsunami, the resulting international coverage and global anxiety arguably provided the perfect platform for an anti-uranium mining and nuclear energy campaign. However, as discussed earlier, anti-nuclear activists were unable to strategically exploit the situation and were instead paralysed by strong emotions and empathy for the Japanese victims. The movement's foci, priorities and communication styles therefore differ from those of public relations professionals, who would have been expected to respond to world events with minimal emotional involvement.

However, it may be immaterial if activists meet specific communication goals, as their role in society appears to reach beyond the confines of a single campaign. I therefore challenge the current focus in the extant PR literature on the success of

²⁸ A controversial method for extracting oil and natural gas.

individual activist campaigns and instead encourage the scholarly community to shift its focus towards the role activists play within society. I propose that as facilitators of change, activists' main role is to engage the community, challenge belief systems and provide the tools to facilitate change, as opposed to pursuing a campaign focus for mere self-interest. Here the focus is not on persuasion, conversion or the reaching of a consensus. Instead, through their mere existence WA ANM activists ensure the availability and presence of alternative perspectives, and thus contribute to a working democracy. This notion is further investigated in the following chapter, which discusses the activist identity and the role of activism in society through the eyes of the WA ANM.

Chapter summary

This overview of the key groups and organisations within the WA ANM emphasises the simplistic and limited nature of the current activist definitions, as used in PR literature and practice. Social movements like the WA ANM are dynamic and characterised by a constantly changing structure that is often not visible to the outside observer, but which equally may appear as chaotic and disorganised to the uniformed bystander. The dynamic nature, variety in communication styles and organisational structures are not captured by the existing definitions of activism.

This study has highlighted that WA ANM activists do not seek a compromise with uranium mining corporations and neither do they engage in any form of negotiation, cooperation or consultation. Activists themselves have no desire to be co-opted into the consultation process. In this case study, the so-called "corporation-activist relationship" is characterised by irreconcilable differences, grounded in fundamentally opposing worldviews, i.e. profit generation vs. categorical opposition to uranium mining, nuclear power and nuclear weapons. This illustrates the lack of a "win-win" zone, or indeed any form of common ground, as well as the absence of any meaningful engagement between mining corporations and anti-nuclear activists. Activists may target corporations' key stakeholders (e.g. shareholders or governments) with individual communication campaigns; however, ultimately they are not concerned with individual mining projects, but the legacy these operations leave.

On their own, activist groups like the WA ANM do not possess sufficient capital to generate change. Instead, they rely on recognition and action by the wider community. Via endorsement of the anti-uranium message, activists become

facilitators of change and are able to accumulate social capital, hence expanding the symbolic capital and power associated with the total network. The data therefore suggests that social capital lies at the core of activist success. Without identification by the wider community with the activist message and issue, perceived urgency and a broad support network, activists remain powerless.

The following chapter examines WA ANM activists' underlying motivations and individuals' understandings of their "activist identity", which provides further insight into how activists' perceive their role in society.

Chapter 8

The activist role and identity

In chapter 6, I examined the role of humour as an integral part of the WA ANM's activities, including the crucial function of humour as creator of bonding capital and hence the strengthening of the movement's collective identity. In this chapter I analyse the activist identity further, by examining what motivates anti-nuclear activists to become "active" in the first place and how they perceive their own identity and role within society. PR scholarship into activism has to date largely examined activism through a corporate lens. Social movement literature has paid particular attention to activists' understanding of the self and their emotional wellbeing. In contrast, underlying motivations and emotions have been ignored in public relations literature, or at best been limited to insights based on an outsider perspective. This chapter provides insight into how WA ANM activists conceptualise their own identity and function within the West Australian society and beyond. Four key roles emerged out of my observations and interviews: the Challenger, the Community Educator, the Custodian and the Facilitator. These roles are not mutually exclusive, but instead co-exist and together point to the function of grassroots activists as facilitators of social change and democratic participation, underpinned by an internalised commitment to social and environmental justice.

The activist 'label'

The term activism elicits a wide range of connotations, including 'freedom fighter' and 'social justice advocate'. But more frequently, particularly in Western cultures and their mainstream media, activists are commonly defined as trouble-makers and aggressors, involved in confrontation and violent protests (e.g. Loney, 2012a; Loney, 2012b; Pennells & Hammond, 2011; Popzeczny, 2011; Prior, 2011), or dismissed as ill-informed and preposterous (e.g. Adshead, 2011; Parker, 2010)²⁹. Further reinforcing this depiction in the mainstream media was the decision by a multinational mining company during the course of this study to issue—and leak to the media—official security cautions to city-based staff, prior to a scheduled anti-

²⁹ Note: I do acknowledge that there are some publications that are more inclined to highlight the activist perspective, such as the UK's *Independent* and *Guardian* newspapers, the *Liberation* and *Le Monde* in France, as well as the *New York Times*. In Australia, 'alternative' perspectives are typically limited to online media (e.g. *Greenleft Weekly*, <http://www.greenleft.org.au> and the *Guardian Australia* online, <http://www.theguardian.co.uk/au>)

nuclear protest in Western Australia's capital Perth. This included warning staff against wearing anything that could identify their employer "because of a safety risk from anti-uranium protesters" (Pennells, et al., 2011). The WA ANM quickly responded, emphasising the "light-hearted" and non-violent nature of their public actions (S. White, 2011). This was not an isolated incident but instead illustrated the State Government's and industry sector's attitude towards and representation of public opposition to the resources-driven agenda in the early 2010s. Activists' intentions were frequently dismissed in online discussion forums and comments in responses to online media articles, as the following comments in response to Towie's (2011) coverage of the 1250 kilometre anti-uranium protest walk illustrate:

Greenies live in some la-la-land fantasy world that believes we can all live in peace and harmony, skipping through the meadows of marijuana plants and singing Kumbaya. (HJR of Perth, 21st August 2011)

Uranium is the SAFEST form of energy there is. Those marching need to do some research instead of getting fooled by scaremongering. (Brian, 21st August, 2011)

These posts illustrate the pro-industry—and, in particular pro-mining—sentiment in Western Australia at the time of this study. Pride in the resources and energy boom was deeply engrained as part of the WA psyche and fiercely defended against those who threatened its continuance. My analysis of hundreds of posts in response to articles on State media websites, such as perthnow.com.au and watoday.com.au, referring to activism illustrates how WA ANM activists in particular were depicted as out of touch, against progress and, most importantly, ill-informed and poorly educated.

As stated in Chapter 2, as in other first world countries, a high level of environmental concern amongst the Australian population does not translate into action (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010a; Fielding, McDonald, & Louis, 2008). Instead, Fielding, et al. (2008) determined that a strong sense of the self as environmental activist is strongly associated with activist intentions (p. 324). This chapter therefore sets out to explore activists' understanding and perception of their own identity and their role within society, which I argue contradicts the image portrayed by corporations, the West Australian Government, the country's mainstream media, as well as the understanding by a large proportion of the WA public.

Mixed feelings about the 'activist' label

WA ANM activists were extremely conscious of the mainstream connotations associated with the activist label, which was perceived as contradictory to their personal interpretation of their work, motivation and belief systems. Many participants were thus comfortable with referring to themselves as “activists” amongst likeminded people, but were tempted to use alternative descriptors when engaging with distant family members or strangers, thereby consciously attempting to avoid any typecasting. Martin explained:

I think the mainstream media [...] has given the word activist a bad rap and I think just the use of that word to some people shuts them down to what you're talking about because they think of activists as being radical and not really sensible about what kind of future we can create and other thing so I don't know. (Martin, interview, 4th May 2011)

The quote above indicates that activists were conscious of the impact a negative perception can have on community support. If community members perceive activists as aggressive and unreasonable, they are not only less likely to provide support in the form of donations or the signing of petitions, but are also likely to be reluctant to be publicly associated with the movement and its cause. As individuals, the causes community members support and issues they associate themselves with define their identity. Negative connotations with the activist label and individual movement's depiction thus have implications for mainstream support and the success of campaigns.

Amongst the WA ANM community, the notion of activism signified more than clever slogans and attendance at demonstrations. Individuals did not make a conscious decision to become 'active', but instead saw 'being active' as intrinsic to engagement in the community and participation in society, i.e. their personal understanding of their self as an “active and engaged person” (Alycia, interview, 28th February 2011). Alice explained how she

thought that it was normal to go to protests, like that wasn't an activist thing to do, that it was just what every citizen in a democracy has the right to do. And then if your voice isn't being heard then you resort to other measures to try and get it heard. So I really think it's more about democracy, but it's just a label and I just never have identified with that label. (Alice, interview, 6th June 2011)

Others agreed:

I think it comes from an altruism or like a sense of compassion and justice because for all these atrocities happening in the world, it does it comes from a place within – that’s not right, that’s not fair, not good for the whole, for everyone. [...] within my world view ideally I would like it to be fair kind of thing and we don’t have that in our society now, [...] for me to be fulfilled I need to be doing something that I feel is contributing. (Rachel, interview, 20th May 2011)

Here, activism signifies personal ideals and identity, which motivate actions, as opposed to the actual label or descriptor individuals may choose to explain their work and express their commitment. Findings further indicate that the underlying, engrained commitment to social and environmental justice lay at the core of the WA ANM. As such, WA ANM activists no longer defined themselves as “anti-nuclear activists”, but simply as “activists” interested in a range of issues, or as “social justice advocates” (observations at actions and in BUMP planning meetings, January – June 2011). In the words of Routledge (2009): “Activism cannot simply be bounded off from other aspects of everyday life” (p. 394). It is an engrained part of individuals’ identity; a way of perceiving and making sense of society, a commitment to take responsibility and a desire to personally contribute to change. The notion of the social justice advocate is examined in more detail in the following section.

Multiple interests and agendas

Rather than aim to exclusively tie activists to the anti-nuclear cause, in an effort to ensure human resources and economic capital, the WA ANM actively encouraged members to be involved in related activist campaigns and to support affiliated groups. Examples included marriage equality, Indigenous issues, such as the Death in Custody Group, environmental campaigns, such as Save the Kimberley, human right’s campaigns, such as the Refugee Action Network and international peace initiatives, such as Footprints for Peace. Julie provided insight into her multiple issue involvement:

When you look at the spectrum of things that I’m interested in, they’re not really different. I mean, they actually all have such a lot of common threads. I mean, West Papua, or Burma, for instance, when you look at the core of the problems there, they’re about our respect or lack of respect for other people and when you look at the nuclear issue, what we’re doing to the earth is we’re not respecting the earth. We’re digging up something that should be left there. When we look at what we’re doing to the atmosphere, this little skin that this poor little planet has and what abuse

we're doing is another way of not showing respect. We're abusing something. You know, there's this common thing. You can actually just make it translate on to just about any issue, where human rights, or environmental abuse, you can actually see them all in these terms, really. (Julie, interview, 15th April 2011)

The quote illustrates that although the issues WA ANM activists support may appear diverse at a first sight, they are all connected by an underlying emphasis on social and environmental justice. This inclusive attitude and cross-issue support dramatically impacted the strategic capabilities of the WA ANM, and essentially its long-term survival. For example, from the activist perspective, the 1250km long 2011 Walk Away from Uranium from Wiluna to Perth, organised in conjunction with the global peace group Footprints for Peace, provided an opportunity to re-invigorate the campaign and bring together traditional custodians, senators, State members of parliament, journalists, lawyers and families (Footprints for Peace, 2011). However, the walks also put a strain on resources and the presence of the WA ANM in Perth. Equally, the Save the Kimberley campaign (Save the Kimberley, 2011), a long-term protest action against the \$30billion development of a liquefied natural gas precinct in Western Australia's North (around 2300 kilometres from its capital Perth), attracted much support from a wide range of not-for-profit organisations and individual activists, who stated concerns about social, cultural and environmental impacts. Although this project was not directly linked to the anti-nuclear movement, the WA ANM was affected by the temporary relocation of some of its supporters. Key initiatives were actively promoted to Perth-based WA ANM activists. For example, anti-nuclear supporters were encouraged via the WA ANM mailing list to attend the "Guerrilla Gig" by West Australian musician John Butler "as a protest against the proposed gas hub at James Price Point in the Kimberley" (email, 30th May 2011).

However, it is important to note that the shifting of attention and resources to another cause did not signify an end of commitment to the WA ANM. Findings suggest that it is the deeply engrained passion for social and environmental justice that drives grassroots activists and not necessarily their alliance to a specific group or organisation. This clearly differentiates them from activists who may be drawn to bigger, well-branded, and high profile NGOs, such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), or Greenpeace. Unfortunately, as highlighted in the literature review in Chapter 3, PR activism scholarship has to date largely focused on these well established and funded organisations, thereby failing to recognise the multifaceted nature of activism. Instead, grassroots activists like the WA ANM are loyal to the

cause and not necessarily to the organisation or group itself. This explains the constantly changing make-up of the WA ANM. Driven by a social justice agenda, WA ANM activists were no longer restricted to anti-nuclear activities:

People are so busy these days, especially activists. Like you say, there's so many causes and so many things going on at any one particular time and there's certain things that we all feel quite passionate about. (Jay, interview, 13th May 2011)

As a result, individuals comfortably moved from one campaign to another and returned to the anti-nuclear movement when they either had sufficient personal resources or perceived an urgent need for action. Similarly, affiliated groups re-directed resources to help a cause if perceived as particularly urgent, depending on their own campaigns and the political climate. Support for and involvement in multiple issues was endorsed and supported by the WA ANM, which was emphasised by the fact that even Australia's most prominent anti-nuclear campaigner and former single issue senator, Jo Vallentine, had been involved in a range of causes beyond the 'narrow' anti-nuclear focus. As a result, the WA ANM, like any other movement, was in a constant state of change, as activists moved in, out and around. In the words of Harvie, et al. (2005): "The point about social movements is that they move. This is how we can best define them: the shifting development of social relations" (p. 9). In *Power, Profit and Protest*, Burgmann (2003) emphasises this "symbiotic relationship" that exists between movements and their participants: "They make each other. A movement is defined by the aspirations of its supporters, yet the image of the movement becomes part of the self-identity of its adherents" (p. 6). Based on the data, I argue that although the WA ANM and its various affiliated groups further shape the identity of its supporters, it ultimately is the social justice activist identity they embrace and that encapsulates the various issues they support. This identity represents a personal way of and outlook on life. In turn, these associated issues, their priorities and groups' communications styles further shape the WA ANM. As a result of this complex, continuously changing activist network, this study will only ever be able to provide a snapshot of the WA ANM, as reflected during the time of this study.

Activism: an individual journey

Although public relations literature on activism regards activists as a homogenous entity, findings highlight differences in individuals' motivation, interpretation of

activism, communication styles and, most importantly, life journeys that led them to activism, which I discuss in more detail over the following paragraphs.

Transforming experiences and motivations

Without exception, all study participants were conscious of an event, a conversation or experience that first inspired and prompted them to become active. Some of these recollections were extremely personal, ranging from involvement in local environmental campaigns, inspiring public lectures and international events that had a deep effect, which was the case for Rachel:

I remember when I was 15 and I was watching the news and they had an anti-war protest as the war was going to happen in Iraq and I remember feeling really moved by that and actually crying, and just really feeling for that and feeling the injustice and that's when it started. (Rachel, interview, 20th May 2011)

For this activist and others, the first conscious exposure to activism or a spirited experience was long remembered and the instigation of future personal involvement in various causes. These experiences were the WA ANM's equivalent to Bourdieu's experience in Algeria, i.e. encounters and incidences that ignited a flame and fuelled a desire to commit their life (or part thereof) to draw attention to inequalities in society and facilitate positive change.

Causes and campaigns that first caught the attention of WA ANM activists varied greatly, ranging from marine life and deforestation campaigns, to mental health issues and lobbying for free education. Not a single one of the study participants, nor any of the activists I engaged with at public actions, was exclusively focused on anti-nuclear issues. The anti-uranium mining campaign may perform a dominant role in their lives for a period of time. However, this did not exclude support for other issues and a change in priorities over time.

The selection process of a cause appeared to be an highly individualistic and personal activity. One participant recalled how on an overseas excursion another activist encouraged her to

Go back to your own country and you'll find something just as horrible in your own country. This happens everywhere and injustice is everywhere. (Alycia, interview, 28th February, 2011, recounting her experience in a Tibetan children village)

The conversation and exposure to overseas activist action reportedly encouraged her to reflect on her life back in Australia, and the issues she felt passionate enough about to want to influence. Other study participants recounted serendipitous encounters with other activists (e.g. Anna, Julie and Martin), exposure to people's suffering (e.g. Verity) or conversations with industry representatives (e.g. Donna) that provided a unique and unexpected insight into power inequalities and the unequal distribution of capital in (Western Australian) society:

I guess I was a bit of a rebel growing up and I was really angry about all this stuff that was going on in the world that I perceived that I couldn't change and so I got to a point where I thought I can't just sit around and be depressed about this anymore. I need to actually do something and it's the best thing I've ever done. (Jay, interview, 13th May 2011)

As illustrated in the quote above, WA ANM activists like Jay perceived activism as a constructive means to personally contribute to and actively influence society. This desire to bring about positive change lies at the core of WA ANM activists' identity, with a clear differentiation between participating in elections and donating money to causes to enable others to bring about change, as opposed to personally taking action to shape the future. However, rather than being exclusively tied to the anti-nuclear cause, WA ANM activists were driven by a desire to highlight inequalities, promote social justice, "make a difference" (Rachel, interview, 20th May 2011) and "contribute to society" in general (Alice, interview, 6th June 2011). The underlying motivation was commonly summarised as a deeply engrained passion for social justice, indirectly implying also environmental justice. This repositions the WA ANM away from a single-issue group, focused exclusively on anti-nuclear issues, to a collective of individuals with multi-issue agendas, which are connected by a deeply engrained belief in "justice". This in turn clarifies the reasons behind the consistently changing composition of the WA ANM, as documented in Appendix 10.1 – 10.4. Throughout the course of this study individuals would drift in, be very passionate about re-instating the ban on uranium mining, spread enthusiasm and plan new, creative initiatives. However, in many cases they would quickly disappear again, as other issues and causes emerged that were perceived to be more urgent or in greater need of their support.

An active interest and involvement in multiple issues can lead to feeling overwhelmed and the sensation of despair. These and other associated emotions, such as self-doubt and hopelessness, are well documented in social movement and

activist literature (Barker, et al., 2008; Cox, 2009; Hoare, 1998; Macy, 1983) and were equally acknowledged by WA ANM activists in this study. In order to avoid negative thoughts and feelings with the potential to undermine their energy and debilitate their ability to foster change, participants referred to a number of strategies that they apply in order to determine their causes and interests of priority. The role of humour in sustaining activists' mental wellbeing has been discussed in Chapter 6. In addition, on an individual basis, WA ANM activists considered their priorities in order to decide where their personal resources would be best invested. Approaches ranged from simplistic means based on "gut instinct" and temporary preferences, as illustrated by the quote below:

I think it's [uranium mining] the most pressing issue at the moment and I mean I only have limited energy and I need to direct that and I have to direct into a thing and for me this is the most important at the moment because there is that constant threat of nuclear power and the fact that we're mining so much of and it has to be. (Rachel, interview, 20th May 2011)

Others, especially long-term activists, referred to a more calculated and deliberate approach, which enabled them to invest their resources in a strategic way. For example, Joy shared insight into her "Circle of Concern and Circle of Influence" exercise, which appeared to be loosely based on Covey's (1989) *7 Habits of Highly Successful People*. By reflecting on her resources and abilities, she identified those things that she could and wanted to control and influence, while setting those aside that she may have felt strongly about and supported, but that she realistically could not get involved in at a particular point in time.

There might be 50 of them [issues of concern]. You think, well, if there's another activist doing this particular exercise somewhere else, some of those things are going to be in their circle of influence, and some of my things are going to be out there in their circle of concern, but not of influence. (Joy, interview, 15th March 2011)

This indicates that despite multiple concerns and interests, study participants were rather instrumental about the choices they made as activists. Based on reflective exercises and coping strategies like this, participants such as Joy determined how to fit their various activist interests and causes they felt passionate about around other priorities, such as family, and non-negotiable commitments, such as work.

Activists did, however, acknowledge the continuous temptation to get involved in other causes and newly emerging issues (e.g. Julie, interview, 15th April, 2011;

Tricia, interview, 28th April 2011). Consequently, a number of participants commented that they would be grateful if someone else could take over and replace them, so they would be able to focus their energy on other causes (e.g. Joy, interview, 15th March 2011; Verity, interview 28th April 2011; Bridget, informal conversation, 14th April 2011). These comments suggest that participation in the WA ANM is not about personal successes and public recognition of achievements, but rather a personal commitment to “fight for what you believe in” (Donna, interview, 17th May 2011) and the desire to positively influence society.

Findings indicate that the causes and issues WA ANM activists adopted were intrinsically linked to their personal identity. Rather than despair, accept circumstances or resign to the current status quo, WA ANM activists expressed a sense of personal responsibility to shape society and influence the distribution of resources and power within it in a way that they perceived as fairer and more just. This responsibility was linked to actions, as opposed to donations to enable others to act on their behalf. The activist identity appeared to be shaped by this assumed commitment to actively seek to influence society. In the words of Jones (2002):

It is through the positions we take on [...] that we add to our personal identity...We seek to create our identities: through lifestyle choices, the things we buy, the groups we belong to, the causes we support and the opinions that we have. (p. 51)

An identity assigns an individual his or her place in society. It informs us “of who we are and how we relate to others in the world in which we live” (Woodward, 1997, p. 1). Identities are multifaceted, as individuals assume different roles. As identities emerge from relationships, the activist identity may be more emphasised and openly expressed amongst likeminded people than amongst relatives (e.g. Martin) or at the local church gathering (e.g. Johnno). For the WA ANM, activism signified more than a hobby or a temporary commitment to a particular issue. Instead, it was a way of seeing the world and making sense of society. Findings therefore indicate that it would be impossible to separate activist activities from other aspects of an individual’s identity. Instead, the activist identity appears to be at the core of participants’ identity. It captures their worldview, priorities and understanding of their personal role within society. Through activism, individuals publicly communicated who they are—via, for example, the causes they “liked” on Facebook, the photos of public actions they were tagged in on social media channels, the campaign t-shirts they wore, the initiatives they publicly aligned themselves with and the experiences they shared with likeminded people as well as non-activists. One example of this

was Johnno³⁰, as detailed in the following paragraph.

As a critical and engaged citizen, the causes Johnno supported and the public positions he assumed became a fundamental part of his identity, to the extent that he used his own body for advocacy purposes. Despite his long-term interest in and involvement with the anti-nuclear movement in both the United Kingdom and Australia, Johnno would design unique t-shirts to highlight a range of topical issues that were close to his heart. Commonly, he would attend BUMP collective meetings wearing an anti-nuclear related shirt, frequently even one of the ANAWA or BUMP campaign t-shirt. However, his designs also made public statements about a wide range of other issues, such as power abuses by the Libyan leader Colonel Gadhafi, criticism of the latest resource development endorsed by the Federal Environment Minister, and controversy surrounding freedom of speech. Sometimes confronting, but always humorous, these t-shirts became one of his trademarks. The fact that Johnno went out of his way to source images and statements and then went to a printing shop to print a one-off, unique t-shirt, illustrates how intrinsic his activist involvement was to his identity.

As old traditions and tight-knit societies gradually disappear, activists like the WA ANM created their own identities via shared meanings and new discourses. Social justice activism became a way of defining and expressing that identity. By choosing to reject certain causes, but to associate themselves with others, individuals make a clear statement about who they are. Actions, which at first may appear simplistic or spontaneous, such as pinning a badge to a jacket, wearing a campaign t-shirt or fixing a sticker to a car, bike or bag, are crucial ways in which individuals express what they believe in and, ultimately, define who they are.

Another example of how public expressions of support define an individual's identity was the continuously oversubscribed nature of anti-nuclear events on the social media platform Facebook (e.g. Uraniumfree WA, 2011b). Commonly, hundreds of supporters publicly stated their intention to attend a public action, such as the demonstration outside the Uranium Mining Conference in Fremantle on 21st July 2011. However, on the actual day, only a fraction would attend in person. In the case of the protest in Fremantle, 107 people had publicly announced they would attend, yet only around 60 arrived on the day, of whom at least half had not been associated with the event via Facebook. This indicates that social media channels

³⁰ Sadly, Johnno unexpectedly passed away during this study. See Acknowledgements.

have become a way to define and publicly manifest one's identity. In this case, it was irrelevant if a person was physically located in a different State or was otherwise unable to attend the actual event. Based on the causes they publicly support, initiatives they "like" and events they endorse, individuals strengthen and express their personal identity.

Despite activism appearing to be a very personal commitment, driven by an individual's worldview, WA ANM activists in this study nevertheless recognised that as an individual, and even as a collective, they lacked the resources and power to bring about the desired lasting change. Nevertheless, participants believed in what they referred to as the "power of one" (e.g. Julie, interview, 15th April 2011; Verity, interview, 28th April), signifying that

very few people can make an amazing difference. [...] you never know the seeds you sow, and really you can sow them with just one person and the impact can be extraordinary. (Anna, interview, 12th April 2011)

Frequently encapsulated under the "cog theory" concept, WA ANM activists firmly believed that even individual actions and commitments contribute to enabling permanent societal change, like "one cog in a great, big, co-operative machine full of little and big wheels turning, you just feel you're just helping that little bit for the trend to change" (Julie, interview, 15th April 2011). As individuals, or even a collective, they drew on limited power. However, by raising awareness of issues, providing an alternative perspective, encouraging others to become active and providing the wider community with the tools and opportunities to have their voice heard, activists facilitated (community) action towards what they perceived as a fairer and more just distribution of resources and power, and in the specific case of the WA ANM, the re-introduction of a permanent ban on uranium mining.

The activist family

Despite a strong emphasis on individualistic actions and personal commitment within the WA ANM, the support of the wider network emerged as crucial. Although some affiliated groups may have had office space, the lack of a common meeting space was a characteristic of and challenge for social movements. Julie explained:

I mean, you're working in your home, battling away, like a little solo person out in the universe in one sense. But on the other sense, because of email and meetings that

we go to and meetings that we have face to face sometimes, you just have a network there that sort of feeds you. (Julie, interview, 15th April 2011)

The quote illustrates that grounded in an individual's worldview, activism can be a lonely and isolating experience. Hence, although irregular, gatherings at public actions or online interactions provided WA ANM activists with emotional support and were vital for the long-term sustainability of the movement. In this context, the wider movement appeared to act in the role of "a family" rather than friends. As an activist explained during a public action:

It's like a family – we go beyond our call of duty. We didn't choose each other – like you don't choose your family. We are all in it for the cause – even if we have our differences. (Danny, 30th March 2011)

The traditional notion of the family suggests implicit acceptance, respect, tolerance, a welcoming attitude and unconditional support. It also indicates the preparedness to give each other as much space as needed, without the requirement for activists to justify themselves if they had to take a step back or take some time out. As with a biological family, participants did not choose members or seek out each other's company. Instead, they were linked by an invisible bond: a common cause, a passion and a commitment to bring about change, which overrode differences in background, education, age and opinion. The assurance of the family support network empowered activists to move in, out and around various other issues. It allowed them to develop their individual identity, pursue other interests and spend time with their non-activist or non-WA ANM friends, with the knowledge that they would always be welcomed back. This notion is further emphasised by the frequent reference to "respect" in emails, newsletters signatures and conversations: encapsulating respect for the environment, other cultures, other people's opinions and priorities, marked by a conscious decision not to cast judgement, but to value alternative perspectives and freedom of expression. As such, the WA ANM may be an important, but essentially only one aspect in their lives, or element of their identities, that sometimes may be their prime focus, but at other times is moved aside and neglected in exchange for other issues and priorities. The notion of the family ensures the long-term survival of the WA ANM, acting as a support net for struggling or disillusioned activists, as well as a means to reinforce activists' individual and collective identity. This support is particularly important for what Smith and Ferguson (2001) refer to as "issue activists" like those in the WA ANM (see Chapter 3, p. 55), i.e. individuals focused on border-spanning causes, as opposed

of those driven by a threat to their own lifestyle or standard of living (interest activists), as they need to maintain their energy and commitment over a prolonged period of time.

A way of life

Like Bourdieu, WA ANM activists refused to conform to societal norms and expectations. Many commented on the fact that their immediate families had assumed that activism had merely been a phase in their lives, encouraging them instead to meet middle class Australian expectations, such as to settle down, secure permanent employment, buy a house and start a family.

They keep saying to me “When are you going to get a job? When are you going to get a *real* job?” They think it’s like a stage or a phase, but it’s a phase that’s been going on for a long time now that you’d think they’d get it. (Alycia, interview, 28th February, 2011)

As indicated, for activists in this study their involvement represented more than simply an interest, pastime or fad. Equally, their involvement signified more than a work commitment:

It’s [activist involvement] not kind of like a nine to five job. It’s sort of a commitment, and a passion. (Tricia, 28th April 2011)

Activists’ passion for social justice and perceived need to address inequalities in society gave their lives meaning and direction. Simultaneously, activism was not perceived as a conscious decision, but a natural progression, from sheltered and uninformed individual to informed, engaged and considerate social and environmental justice advocate.

It’s just your life, that’s it. For years I studied, working and doing activism and doing community radio and it was all just one. Except for the work, because I’d get paid work so I could fund doing what I wanted to do. But uni was about writing assignments and learning about stuff that would help me do my campaigns. The radio show is just a way of campaigning, and then the protest was the end game, what you were there for, just the lifestyle—if you could call it a lifestyle. (Alycia, interview, 28th February 2011)

Yeah, definitely, and I feel like I don’t really have any separation between my life and the campaign. I feel like my life is the campaign but I don’t think that’s really a bad thing. I feel really inspired. (Martin, interview, 4th May 2011)

As illustrated in the quotes above, for study participants, activism was not something individuals could turn on and off, or opt in and out of. It was perceived as a lifestyle in itself. Hence, meeting family (i.e. settling down, buying a house, a successful career) or societal expectations was not a priority. For example, many WA ANM activists had taken on work specifically to fund their activist lifestyles. Those who had secured one of the rare paid positions (usually with specialist portfolios of established NGOs or the Greens party) were attracted by the job scope and not the wages, which tend to be non-competitive. However, even these paid positions were usually on a part-time and, without exception, contractual basis. Continuing employment depended on fundraising efforts and the securing of grants.

In summary, the WA ANM is composed of individuals whose personal outlook and commitment ensures the continuous profiling of anti-nuclear issues in the community, media and political sphere. However, the WA ANM is usually not their sole focus. Activists tend to pursue a multitude of interests and issues, which are prioritised based on perceived urgency and personal impact. Like Pierre Bourdieu, WA ANM activists are driven by a strong sense of social justice. In fact, the label “WA ANM activist” is misleading, as individuals’ interests in local, national and international affairs, as well as passion for equal rights and opportunities, take them well beyond the anti-nuclear focus. Here activism signifies an attitude to life and an outlook on society, which motivates individuals to become involved in a range of causes during their lives, and often even simultaneously. As social justice advocates, they are aligned with and feel passionate and loyal about an issue rather than the organisation. They commit their lives (or part thereof) to speak out on behalf of those whose voices have been drowned out due to a lack of resources or perceived limited influence on corporations and governments. Driven by a perceived sense of duty, they are prepared to sacrifice personal benefits such as job security, high incomes or house ownership. From their perspective, “activist” is more than a title or a label. Because of activists’ changing priorities and alignment, movements like the WA ANM are in a constant state of change. This has implications for researchers, as the study of movements becomes more complex and challenging than research in corporation-like not for profit organisations. Simultaneously, the multi-issue involvement highlights the limitations of the activist label as currently applied in public relations literature, which is too simplistic and fails to capture the dynamic nature of activism, as well as differences in size, motivation, communication styles, structure and underlying philosophy.

Us vs. them: revisiting the “activist-corporation relationship”

Identities are “social constructions emerging from discursive practices, and they form in relationship to something else” (Patricia A. Curtin & Gaither, 2007, p. 168). As discussed in Chapter 7, despite the implied activist-corporation relationship in existing public relations literature, study findings have highlighted the absence of meaningful engagement between the two factions (see “Irreconcilable differences” on page 183). Instead, corporations’ primary role appears to be in assisting WA ANM activists understand and make sense of activism as part of a binary opposition, i.e. their actions, motivation and activist identity are fundamentally different to corporate practices, priorities and styles of communication. Activists view themselves in relation—and resistance—to corporations. From the WA ANM’s perspective, uranium mining corporations and the WA government valued economic benefits ahead of environmental impacts and the sustainability of the West Australian lifestyle. As such, they considered that the companies’ main incentive was the maximisation of profits:

These multinational corporations are just pretty much lying their arses off to manipulate society in general so as they can increase their shares and financial portfolios. (Jay, interview, 13th May 2011)

This focus on economic benefits was perceived to contrast activists’ focus on society and future generations:

I’ve got little notices on my desk ... that we’re actually protesting for the future of our kids whereas these pro-nuclear guys are protesting to get wealthy and keep the industry going. (Johnno, interview, 5th April 2011)

The issues that participants supported were marked by similarity, connected by the common theme of social and environmental justice. At the same time they were marked by difference from corporate interests and the State’s focus on a capitalist, neoliberal agenda. The activist identity was reinforced and strengthened by emphasising the difference between the anti-nuclear movement and their ‘opposition’; that is, corporations and governments. Activists thereby assumed the role of a watchdog (participant observation, BUMP Collective meetings, January – June 2011; Kathy, conversation, 22 March 2011; Alycia, interview 28th February, 2011). The role of the watchdog was to hold corporations and governments responsible for their actions by informing the community, encouraging action in response to what they perceive as an unjust distribution of resources, and by “being a thorn in the thigh of the mining industry” (BUMP launch, participant observation,

5th June 2009). The same sentiment emerged in the formative stages of this study, which incorporated activists from a range of different groups.

WA ANM activists perceived mining companies to be motivated by wealth accumulation, power, expansion and financial success. In contrast, WA ANM activists understood themselves as their dualistic opposite. Grassroots activism offers few relevant paid positions and no traditional career path. Instead of being driven by professional aspirations or personal gain, anti-nuclear activists made personal sacrifices, which they considered allowed them to speak and act on behalf of the wider community. This was illustrated on the Anti Nuclear Alliance of Western Australia website, which claimed that the umbrella organisation represented three quarters of the WA population, in their opposition to nuclear energy and uranium mining (Anti Nuclear Alliance of Australia (ANAWA), 2008). Rather than profit personally, activists chose to invest their own time and resources to enable and self-finance their involvement. Alycia explained:

That's the funny thing about activists, they don't get paid to do it; they actually work other jobs and pay to be an activist. People put in so much of their own personal money to do campaigning; it's like this totally backwards thing. It's weird. I think the public are suspicious about that because they don't understand that people would do that. (Alycia, interview, 28th February, 2011)

This personal investment further highlights the integral role of the activist, or social justice identity at an individual level, as study participants invested not only their own time but also financial resources to pursue what they perceived to be in the interests of the wider community, as opposed to commercial interests. Anna equally emphasised the conundrum of the self-funded activist, and her annoyance in response to industry claims that activists are “scaremongering” (Anna, interview, 12th April 2011), or “reverse astroturfing” (Johnno, informal conversation, 19th April 2011) for their own personal benefit. This criticism was particularly prevalent after the 2011 Fukushima disaster:

I suppose the anti-nuclear movement was going to take advantage of this accident, of this catastrophe, to pedal their sort of line, and you think: so it really pays to have shares in the anti-nuclear movement; it's really going to make you rich. You know what I mean? Like what is the interest that these people are pedalling? I mean it's just bizarre, isn't it? As though they're gaining some benefit. (Anna, interview, 12th April 2011)

Anna's satirical and sometimes even bitter comments highlight how activists perceived themselves as more genuine, purer, and arguably more appropriately positioned to speak on behalf of the community. In contrast to the anti-nuclear lobby, they were not gaining financially or professionally from their actions.

Equally, whilst WA ANM activists perceived the industry's focus to be on the long-term viability of their respective corporations and project profits, their objective may have been to achieve long-term, permanent change (e.g. the reinstating of the ban on uranium mining), but not the long term survival of the respective collectives, affiliated groups and campaigns. Individual groups and campaign foci were regarded as a means to an end, with little meaning or value attached beyond the issue of focus (i.e. uranium mining). Without the immediate threat of uranium mining the movement would be able (at least temporarily) to dissolve and individuals would be free to move on to other issues and campaigns of interest and concern. By definition, individuals' identity as social justice advocates implies that there will always be other issues on which to focus. Hence, activists' alliance was with a particular cause and not with an organisation, group or movement, which tend to break up and re-form in various guises, depending on individuals' perceived urgency of the issue and need for involvement.

In summary, engagement and a comparison with corporations enables WA ANM activists to further strengthen and define their own identity and role in society, which they perceive as a dualistic opposite to that of neoliberal governments and commercially driven organisations. This contrast is not only evident in their self-allocated role in society, but equally in decision making styles, such as the lack of hierarchies and consensus based decision making.

Activist roles

The previous section has illustrated how WA ANM activists display all four themes identified based on Pierre Bourdieu's work and life in Chapter 4. They dedicate their work and professional skills to challenge inequalities; they inadvertently merge their personal and professional lives; and they enact the role as a guardian of social justice. All of these elements override pressures to conform to norms and societal expectations. Considering the lack of primary, first hand insight in public relations literature into what it signifies to be an activist from the activist perspective, I was interested in finding out how WA ANM activists define activism and how they conceptualise their role in society, especially in relation to the governments and

corporations whose worldview they challenge. Four roles emerged as a result of the data analysis, all of which are grounded in activists' self-imposed identity as social justice advocates. These are individually examined in the second part of this chapter.

The social justice advocate

Like any individual, anti-nuclear activists have multiple identities, each of which are emphasised at different times, depending on priorities, circumstances and environmental stimuli, such as a BUMP action meeting, as opposed to a family barbeque or a work commitment. However, based on the study findings, I argue that the social and environmental justice advocate identity lies at the core, determined by an individual's worldview. It is important to note that although study participants emphasised a commitment to environmental justice, they only did so indirectly, usually encompassed under the concept of social justice.

Social (and environmental) justice as key motivation

In interviews, WA ANM activists reflected on what they referred to as a shift in anti-nuclear activism. Many of those who had been active in the 1980s and early 1990s recalled that during those early days there was a single-minded focus on anti-nuclear and disarmament activities, which often dominated nearly every aspect of their lives (e.g. interview with Anna, 12th April 2011). However, since then, the West Australian activist community had undergone a number of changes, marked by an increased prevalence of environmental consciousness in Western society (Aldrich, 2010) and hence an explosion of activist campaigns and foci (Joy, informal conversation, 30th September 2009; Kathy, informal interview, 18th February 2011). Study participants thus broadly agreed with Martin's (2007) observation that the 'mainstream status' of environmental consciousness may have contributed to the decline of the anti-nuclear movement, or at least to a reduction in its public profile. As a result, WA ANM activists agreed that it would be impossible to replicate mass protests, such as the Palm Sunday Rallies from the early 1980s, in which hundreds and even thousands of concerned citizens took to the streets of Perth to demonstrate for peace and nuclear disarmament. In the 2010s, anti-nuclear activities relied on a core group of activists, who primarily measured their success in terms of "keeping the flame alive" (Martin, interview, 4th May 2011), i.e. ensuring the continued existence of the movement and its profile amongst other (related) social

and environmental causes. This study identified only a limited number of WA ANM supporters that were pre-dominantly focused on anti-nuclear issues, including a ban on uranium mining. Most of these people were employed in the limited number of paid positions, such as the Uranium Free Campaigner at the Conservation Council or the spokesperson for the Anti Nuclear Alliance of Western Australia. Alycia explained her understanding of the activism concept:

I suppose 'activist' sounds like what you're doing is something radical or something, a little bit like naughty or cheeky or something. I suppose I don't want the world to change but the amount of people that identify with it, so that it's not about being an activist, it's about being a person, it's about being mainstream, it's about what people that live on this earth do; it's a collective conscientiousness of being active and involved and engaged in what's happening environmentally and socially. (Alycia, interview, 28th February 2011)

These comments illustrate that activists were driven by their outlooks on life, belief systems, and personal perceptions of what society should look like, which they commonly described as “social consciousness” or “commitment to social justice”. In the WA ANM context, the personal commitment to social justice was interpreted as a wish to contribute to and actively shape a more egalitarian society, with a strong emphasis on human rights, solidarity and equality of opportunity. Activists particularly emphasised “respect” as a core value that drove and inspired them. Respect underpins activists' regard for each other and tolerance of different opinions and viewpoints. This is illustrated in the movement's emphasis on collective decision making, its lack of hierarchies, and the absence of permanently allocated responsibilities or leadership positions.

Study participants were highly engaged and interested in international public affairs, displaying a strong interest in a wide range of issues such as the uprisings in the Middle East and Africa, freedom of speech—such as support for organisations like Wikileaks (see e.g. Benkler, 2011)—resource projects in the Amazon Delta and the impact of a proposed gas pipeline through the United States of America, to name a few. Current affairs as well as other State-based campaigns were frequently mentioned and discussed in meetings and during actions.

However, beyond the role as social (and implied environmental) justice advocate I have identified four roles, which WA ANM activists adopted at different times during this study, namely that of the challenger, educator, custodian and facilitator. Each of

these roles were more prevalent at different times, based on priorities and perceived requirements. These roles are discussed in detail in the following section.

The activist as “challenger”

Media articles and in particular readers’ comments in response to online articles frequently refer to activists as nuisances, trouble-makers and a source of annoyance. WA ANM activists proudly embraced these characteristics, describing themselves as “a [definite] thorn in their [corporations’ and governments’] side” (Joy, interview, 15th March 2011 and Martin, conversation at BUMP meeting, 8th March 2011), a “major source of frustration” (Alice, interview, 28th February 2011) and “an awful nuisance” (Julie, interview, 15th April 2011). It appeared as if activists wore the “trouble-maker” label as a badge of honour that identified them as challengers of the status quo. They perceived their role in society as one that challenged and confronted existing beliefs in an open, engaging, humorous and peaceful manner. Drawing on the idea of activists as “challengers”, Tricia described the role of activism in democratic societies as “bothering people” by providing:

a voice different from the status quo. It [might be] strong. It [might be] weak. But it provides an opposition. It provides common sense. It gives people something to identify with. (Tricia, interview, 28th April 2011)

This quote illustrates that WA ANM activists do not expect to compete with corporations or governments on an equal, power-sharing level. Instead, they are content to “disrupt them [decision makers] just enough” (Tricia). This interpretation of activism resembles Bourdieu’s emphasis on activists’ significance in modern societies, based on their mere existence (however small it might be) and ability to challenge mainstream thinking (Bourdieu, 1998a). By challenging the dominant views and overpowering voices in a given society, social movements like the WA ANM provide a platform for active citizens to come together to further explore and exchange alternative ideas with likeminded people. Johnno compared this process to “chucking out the fishing line to see who’s out there, and whether anyone’s interested enough in that kind of stuff to reply to it” (interview, 3rd March 2011). That is, if there was a critical mass of people who felt in a similar way about a cause, such as opposition to nuclear power and uranium. These comments support Melucci’s (1989) understanding of social movements as being formed in networks submerged in daily life. These invisible networks provide the platform for the formation of a collective identity and coherent action, as participants challenge and

question the dominant codes of everyday life. This includes challenging what participants in this study widely referred to as “increasing apathy in society”. Activists associated this disconnectedness and indifference with life in “Western democratic countries” and particularly emphasised in Western Australia, as the State’s economy strongly relies on the resources boom and thus fails to question the dominant role of mining and petroleum corporations. Anna observed:

You get to a certain level of, I don’t know, comfort or things that you accept as being rights by right, and then people stop sort of struggling and they just accept. I just think people are so accepting of the message that they get, and there’s not really much analysis involved in anything really. I find it extremely depressing actually, I have to say. (Anna, interview, 12th April 2011)

As discussed in Chapter 2, most West Australians enjoy a relatively comfortable lifestyle, which activists recognised as limiting the perceived need to become engaged and demand change. Furthermore, activists largely credited the perceived disconnectedness of the WA community to social and geographical distancing (see Chapter 6, page 153):

I think they would care a hell of a lot if they got up one morning and there was an oil rig out there and the beach was covered in oil. Yes, I think we are very complacent. (Johno, interview, 3rd March 2011)

And

People don’t want it [nuclear power]. In theory they might think it’s a great idea, but they don’t want it [in their backyard]. (Tricia, interview, 28th April 2011)

Due to the remote location of uranium mines and the transportation of uranium ore via South Australia, West Australians typically do not see, experience or feel the effects of mineral and associated operations. As active citizens, activists perceived it as their responsibility to challenge, question and thereby encourage other community members to become more compassionate, observant and critical, as opposed to accepting and disengaging. This includes encouraging them to get actively engaged in democratic decision making via links to online petitions, distribution of contact details for key Ministers and other opportunities for citizens to have their voice heard (e.g. public actions, awareness raising walks, such as the Walkajurra Walk (Footprints for Peace, 2011), information forums, and information about industry events). Humour has been particularly highlighted in this context as a means of challenging perceptions, encouraging citizens to look beyond mainstream

media reporting and agenda setting, as well as providing a means of promoting critical engagement and analysis of current affairs (see Chapter 6).

As “challengers”, WA ANM activists oppose the notion of a compromise with corporations, which is widely endorsed in public relations literature as an example of excellent practice (see page 209 in Chapter 7). As discussed in the previous chapter, throughout this study, engagement between mining corporations and WA anti-nuclear activists was respectful, but superficial and essentially minimal. Rather than seeking a compromise with corporate entities or engaging in a dialogue via consultation exercises, activists perceived it as their role to challenge the dominant, economy-driven paradigm by planting seeds of doubt amongst the wider community, based on social and environmental focused discourses. Thereby, they did not only challenge the nuclear industry, but ultimately the WA status quo.

In summary, WA ANM activists proactively acknowledge and embrace the power discrepancies between themselves and the corporations and governments they challenge. Rather than seek opportunities for negotiation or cooperation, anti-nuclear activists perceive their role as challengers of the status quo. Their aim is to disrupt, confront and contest the existing state of affairs by forcing the community as well as shareholders to stop, question and re-evaluate their own beliefs and values.

Activists as “community educators”: “join the dots”

With the help of humour and other ways of creative expression (such as colourful banners, street theatre, song and dance) (see Chapter 6), WA ANM activists consciously adopted the role of “community educators”. They informed and “educated” the wider community by investing their personal time in writing reader’s letters to both State and national publications. They produced information material, educational flyers and draft submissions in response to mining proposals in an attempt to “bring attention of the public to the issue [i.e. uranium mining]” (Jay, interview, 13th May 2011). Initiatives such as demonstrations and public actions provided an opportunity to raise awareness of the anti-nuclear issue and a forum to provide further subject specific information and details. Equally, placards and banners at public events had the potential to raise awareness of the nuclear circle and associated issues via the creative use of slogans and campaign names, which encouraged WA citizens to become mindful, question their current belief systems and knowledge, and to consequently engage with the issue, either immediately by

exploring the anti-nuclear topic through conversations with activists, the reading of campaign related handouts, or by seeking further information at future events and/or related websites (e.g. www.anawa.org.au). Activists referred to educational activities as “myth busting about uranium mining” with the aim to encourage the community “to want to talk [find out more] about it” (Kay, interview, 28th April 2009).

As alluded in the quote above, WA ANM activists perceived their key strength in one-on-one conversations with community members. As illustrated in Chapter 6, humour is frequently applied as a tool to ensure activists attract their audience’s attention, overcome potential barriers and keep them engaged. The WA ANM believed that the community was suffering under an overload of largely corporation-sourced information, which left citizens confused, overwhelmed and unable to form their individual opinion on a specific issue:

People are hoodwinked so easily because there’s too much information about just about everything, so that people are informed about nothing. (Anna, interview, 12th April 2011)

Anti-nuclear activists’ therefore saw their role as one that enabled “people to make an informed choice” (Johno, interview, 3rd March 2011). They did this by encouraging citizens to “join the dots” (Joy, conversation at Breakfast Action, 25th February, 2011; Anna, interview, 12th April 2011; Martin, interview, 4th May 2011); that is, to see the bigger picture and wider impacts. This would occur, for example, by making the connection between the mining of uranium ore, nuclear power, nuclear weapons and waste storage, as well as resulting health impacts. Martin expanded further on this holistic perspective:

I don’t think that connection has gone deep enough yet to people really understanding that we have supplied the fuel that this radiation that is spewing out of Fukushima³¹ originated from a uranium mine in Australia and I think it’s that process and I don’t think this is just with nuclear or uranium or whatever. I think it’s to that extent, do the people in Afghanistan or anywhere in the world who are growing opium poppy fields really understand the connection between the young people overdosing on heroin and stuff in other parts of the world and I think we need to understand that Australia is the beginning of the supply chain for people being affected by radiation, but I don’t think the reality of that has really sunk in to people yet. (Martin, interview, 4th May 2011)

³¹ Site of 2011 nuclear disaster in Japan, see page 166 for more details.

Martin's comments are representative of the movement's outlook on life and individual activists' responsibility to society, both in Western Australia and beyond. They further illustrate anti-nuclear activists' role as what Smith and Ferguson (2001) label issue activists, who are driven by their social consciousness, as opposed to the motivation to better themselves or their individual standard of living (see Chapter 3, page 61). Anti-nuclear activism provides limited job and funding opportunities (see pages 56 & 98). Successes are limited and are usually recognised as a team effort with minimal mainstream media recognition. As such, they are—in contrast to achievements by corporate PR teams—not exchangeable for money, personal recognition or promotional opportunities. Instead, activists were driven by the desire to positively influence the future of the State, which they largely seek to achieve via educational means. As community educators, WA ANM activists' primary motivation was not to persuade audiences to their viewpoint, but to provide the community with (alternative) facts, knowledge and additional information, which would enable them to reach their own conclusion. Naturally, anti-nuclear activists were driven by the belief that the facts speak for themselves and that the “truth” is on their side (observation at BUMP planning meetings, January-June 2011). However, they accept that not everyone will be prepared to listen and engage with their information. From the activist perspective, two characterising features of the (West) Australian landscape emphasise the crucial role of the community educator as part of democratic decision making processes: first, the pro-industry agenda of the already limited media industry and secondly, the agenda setting role of corporations (in particular the resources sector), which have a direct impact on legislation and policy processes. Both are investigated in more detail over the following paragraphs.

The agenda setting influence of the Australian media

Contrary to suggestions by PR scholars (e.g. L. A. Grunig, 1992a; Holtzhausen, 2000), WA ANM activists did not perceive that the media provided them with additional power over organisations. Instead, WA ANM activists emphasised the engrained industry bias and lack of diversity that characterised the already very limited Australian media landscape (see Chapter 2, page 39). Throughout this study, the WA ANM's engagement with the media was minimal and not a key campaign focus. WA ANM activists frequently criticised the Australian media in planning meetings and informal conversations for the agenda setting role it had

adopted, by either not covering activist activities at all, or distorting their aims, motivation and messages by “not representing what we say fairly” (Alycia, interview, 28th February 2011):

The media is really influential. [...] you can write an article or you can write a media release to the media, you can have a protest, you can have thousands of people at a protest and they may or may not come. They decide; they decide what’s an issue, they decide what’s relevant. They have a hell of a lot of power but they’ve also got a hell of a lot of big interest in the mining industry. So when it comes down to us attacking part of the resource sector and the profit [the state makes] from it, well then what are they going to do? They’re not going to give us a good rap; it’s just not in their best interest. (Alycia, interview, 28th February 2011)

Others agreed, but also highlighted the increasingly passive role assumed by consumers:

That’s what the media does. They just distort and people don’t poke about. I’ve always said to my daughter never believe what you read in the newspaper. Never really believe it, never think that that’s the story. Always look at the agenda. (Anna, interview, 12th April 2011)

These comments highlight that activists were suspicious of the media and their commercial interests, which resulted in a lack of engagement with mainstream journalists and the absence of media relations activities. Verity compared the actions of the media to a “blackout”. She cited a range of experiences where she provided access to leading international nuclear experts, particularly during the aftermath of the Japanese tsunami and around Chernobyl Day. However, the media was not interested and the result was “only pro-nuclear pieces in *The Australian*” (Verity, interview, 28th April 2011). Consequently, activists felt media relations did not equate to an effective use of their limited resources, although later in the study the WA Conservation Council’s Uraniumfree Advocate did provide comment when directly approached by the State’s newspaper.

The lack of coverage of activist campaigns and viewpoints was confirmed by my document analysis. It may be explained by the media sector’s close relationship with the industry, which effectively represents major advertisers, a key income stream in the 21st century media landscape. As alluded to in Chapter 7, the Australian media coverage following the nuclear meltdown in Fukushima largely represented the nuclear industry’s commercial perspective, providing none to only minimal coverage of counter voices. Particularly as time progressed, the impacts of

the disaster on the Japanese public largely focused on facts (for example, number of people displaced, government decisions, evacuation zone facts, mechanics of nuclear reactors), illustrated with diagrams and models (e.g. *The Sunday Times*, 2011; *The West Australian*, 2011b, 2011c, 2011h), as opposed to images displaying the human and social impact. Following the initial front page coverage (e.g. Alford, 2011a; Nuclear Evacuation, 2011; *The West Australian*, 2011f; *The West Australian*, 2011g), the meltdown was quickly relegated to news agency sources, and short articles under world news (e.g. *The Weekend West*, 2011; *The West Australian*, 2011a, 2011d, 2011e). The Australian perspective on nuclear energy and uranium focused on economic benefits (e.g. Cameron, 2011; Devine, 2011; England, 2011b; Strong, 2011), and even in the early days after the disaster, in-text quotes were almost exclusively limited to industry representatives such as the Australian Uranium Association Executive Director and the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation Chairman (e.g. Passmore, 2011; Andrew Tillett, 2011). Critical, anti-nuclear sentiment was restricted to comment pieces (e.g. Hopkin, 2011; Lloyd, 2011; Mayes, 2011), and predominantly expressed in the readers' letter sections (e.g. Arthur Pagonis from Morley, 2011; Cameron Poustie from Mt Hawthorn, 2011; Jo Vallentine. Chairperson of the Anti-Nuclear Alliance of WA, 2011; Judy Blyth from Daglish, 2011; R. Dixon from Willagee, 2011). In the early days, however, these were overshadowed by pro-nuclear comments with titles such as "Nuclear scare tactics" and "Get real" and proclamations by various readers that they would "cheerfully live next door to a nuclear plant" (Letters, 2011). Equally, coverage coinciding with West Australian uranium conferences almost exclusively focused on economic facts provided as part of the industry's PR activities (ABC News, 2010b; M. Bennett, 2010; Fullerton, 2011; Granger, 2010), commonly failing to mention the existence of alternative perspectives. If mentioned, the anti-nuclear voice was dismissed as insignificant, lacking influence and expertise (ABC News, 2010a; A. Hepworth & D. Kitney, 2010; Pratt, 2011).

The role of Gina Rinehart, Australia's richest person, the world's wealthiest woman and the owner of some of Australia's most lucrative mining operations, is also significant. Her efforts in 2012 to increase her influence of the news agenda (Rourke, 2012) further highlighted the impacts the concentration of media ownership in Australia has on alternative viewpoints and the multiplicity of voices.³² At the start

³² Framing herself as a "white knight", throwing a lifeline to the struggling Fairfax media group (Hickman, 2012), Rinehart demanded up to three seats on the group's board in exchange for her substantial investment (Kitney, 2012). At the same time Rinehart refused to sign the company's charter of editorial independence (Hickman, 2012), which resulted in a nation-wide outcry and renewed calls

of the 21st century, the Australian media landscape fails to act in the power-levelling capacity that has been suggested by PR scholars, but instead further reinforces existing power relationships, to the disadvantage of activists.

The media had increasingly functioned as a filter, censoring the multitude of perspectives and opinions represented in the Australian society on a given issue (i.e. nuclear energy and uranium mining) and selectively limiting the reach and distribution of those viewpoints that are not perceived as commercially beneficial. Based on my content analysis I argue that this industry closeness to the media and selectivity by the mainstream media in representation of viewpoints appears to be particularly emphasised within the resources-driven West Australian context.

These findings correspond with WA ANM activists' perception of the role the media performs in the West Australian society:

They are obviously hoping to mine a lot more here and transport probably [...]. And I think the media here is not as frank and honest about it as they are in most other places in the world, even in the eastern states [of Australia]. (Johno, interview, 3rd March 2011)

Don't forget a lot of the stuff we say doesn't get reported. You know, particularly in the west. *The Western Australian*, they're just so pro-mining. (Tricia, interview, 28th April 2011)

Comments like these highlight that activists distrust the mainstream media and are suspicious of, even cynical about, journalists' underlying intentions and agendas. From the activist perspective the media actively influence the nation's agenda and consequently policy decisions, by sharing only selective interpretations of reality. This industry-centric agenda is perceived as a type of conspiracy to disempower the community by keeping "the masses disillusioned but comfortable...[so that] they are not going to stand up and take action" (Rachel, interview, 20th May 2011). Activists

for media reform, greater government control and penalties for publications who breach their own charter (Crowe, 2012). Known for her conservative, pro-industry views, Rinehart has been vocal about her power as majority shareholder in media interviews and open letters, in which she frequently threatened to sell her holdings in Fairfax and invest in alternative media outlets if her demands were not met (Cubby, 2012). She eventually offloaded \$86 million worth of shares in July 2012 (Durie, 2012). However, with just under 15 per cent, she continued to be Fairfax' largest shareholder. Despite opposition to her appointment to the board, one of Rinehart's closest allies, Jack Cowin, who runs the Hungry Jacks and KFC franchises, was appointed shortly after her reduction in Fairfax shares (Davidson, 2012). Although currently not a uranium investor, Rinehart has emphasised her interest to expand into diamonds, oil, gas and uranium (Kerr & Stensholt, 2012), based on potential return on investment (RPI). Known for her contempt for the green movement (Hickman, 2012) and hostility towards government reform (Hickman, 2012; Rourke, 2012), Rinehart's efforts to increase her influence on the news agenda via board membership epitomises the philosophical debate between capitalist power and the sustainability inspired green movement.

therefore see it as their role to challenge the dominant paradigm, which is distributed via mainstream channels. Rather than actively seeking out media coverage for their own actions and the anti-nuclear cause, they counteract the perceived industry agenda via community education at events, actions, protests and online, thereby encouraging communities to challenge the status quo, form their own opinions, become active, and speak out for what they believe in.

Despite suggestions by PR and media scholars that new communication channels may address and potentially even equalise existing power inequalities between traditionally well-resourced corporations and resource poor activist groups (e.g. Bray, 1998; Bunting & Lipski, 2001; Coombs, 1998; Heath, 1998; Jaques, 2006; Mazzini, 2004, see Chapter 3, page 78), the WA ANM predominantly used social media channels such as Facebook for 'internal' purposes, focused on keeping existing activists and supporters informed about developments and public actions. Established NGOs like the WWF (see e.g. World Wildlife Fund (WWF) International, 2011) have demonstrated the potential of new technologies in reaching a substantial, sometimes even global audience that actively participates in open source campaigns and effectively elevates the awareness and urgency associated with a particular issue (see e.g. Nicholson, 2009). However, during the course of this study, the WA ANM lacked the resources (human, financial and expertise) to effectively use these tools for public campaigns. As a result, anti-nuclear activists needed to identify alternative and creative tactics which allowed them to educate audiences directly at public actions or information events.

The agenda setting influence of the (mining) industry

As illustrated in Chapter 2, the mining and resources industry is a major driving force behind Australia's continuing economic strength. This position translates into power, particularly in terms of influence over legislation and political decision making (see Chapter 7, page 211). As a result, both the West Australian State Government and the Federal Government have proposed changes to the influence of their Mining and Resources Ministers that extend their power to overwrite environmental restrictions (Barlow, 2007; Towie, 2009). WA ANM activists believe that this shift in priorities—which sees commercial interests and economic performance positioned ahead of community, environmental and cultural concerns—as a result of the mining sector's agenda setting influence. One activist described the “amount of power they [mining companies] have over the

government” as “amoral, obviously, but probably inevitable” (Jay). The strong influence of the resources industry within Australia’s political sphere further increases activists’ perceived need to educate the community, thereby providing context and background, as well as an alternative perspective to the largely industry driven agenda of the mainstream media and major political parties.

“The Truth” as major strength

The following section illustrates how WA ANM activists coped with and managed the contextual influences discussed above. Contrary to the widespread perception in discussion threads and opinion pieces, WA ANM activists avoided emotive messaging³³. As illustrated above, a further common perception amongst commentators in readers’ letters and online comment sections was the lack of expertise, knowledge and realism amongst anti-nuclear activists. This perception contrasts with the strong emphasis on research and subject specific knowledge as emphasised by participants in this study. Anti-nuclear activists relied heavily on media scanning, the distribution of relevant reports and statistics, as well as an emphasis on empirical evidence to expand the network’s cultural capital and support activists’ educational arguments. In the absence of multiple perspectives in the mainstream media, activists perceived it as their responsibility to educate the community by providing alternative viewpoints, supported by facts and scientific research.

This focus on scientific research and facts was emphasised by the key advantage that WA ANM activists considered themselves to have over corporations, commonly referred to as “the truth”:

We’ve got history on our side and we’ve got the truth on our side, and that is that no uranium mine has operated successfully, no uranium mine has operated without damaging the environment or costing taxpayers money. Just like no nuclear power station has ever been opened without government subsidies. We’ve got facts, we’ve got the truth and the facts. They’ve got promises but we’ve got history and truth. And the truth is that this industry has failed time and time again to operate safely or cheaply. (Alycia, 28th February 2011)

I think basically at the end of the day we have the truth behind us. I think all the stuff that the industry puts out about things being safe and green and clean is basically

³³ See for example “Let’s have a rational debate please, not this emotional rubbish” in response to Scott Ludlam’s (2010) opinion piece.

twisting the facts and juggling the numbers and not showing the whole picture. I think our advantage is that if you can really join the dots for people so as they can see the whole picture then nearly everyone will be against it and I think again that is why the industry spends millions and millions of dollars on their propaganda because that's all they have. They have their money and their paid scientists and other institutions to twist the truth and juggle the numbers for them. (Martin, 4th May 2011)

As guardians of “the truth”, activists accepted that it was their responsibility to share their knowledge and perspectives with the wider community. Equipped with statistics and first-hand accounts from “people that had lived it and experienced it [uranium mining, radiation]” (Alycia, interview, 28th February 2011), the WA ANM set out to “expose the lies of the industry” (Alycia) and challenge the pro-nuclear lobby in public forums, such as town hall debates:

Where there is a debate, a proper debate, three speakers here, three speakers there, we had them, hands down, we win a debate every time if we get enough time to explain a little bit and to join all those dots, we win the argument. (Joy, 15th March 2011)

WA ANM activists thereby suggest that a singular, definite ‘truth’ exists. This contrasts with the notion of multiple truth and stands in contrast to their espousal of multiple viewpoints, as discussed earlier. This worldview and conceptualisation of activists as guardians of the truth, who challenge corporate and governmental lies, is reflected in activism literature and first-hand campaign accounts (e.g. Ackerman & Duvall, 2000; B. Burton & Hager, 2000). The guardianship of “the” singular truth implies legitimacy and ultimately justification for activist activities. In summary, WA ANM activists perceived themselves as community educators. Grounded in their communications in subject specific knowledge and first-hand accounts, they understood it as their duty to alert the community to what they perceived to be the industry-driven agenda of politicians and the mainstream media, as well as to share their alternative perspective and data, in order to enable other citizens to make informed decisions. Their role as community educators becomes particularly crucial in the context of the West Australian agenda setting resources industry, whose promotion of nuclear energy and mining was the source of mainstream media’s coverage, to the detriment of alternative voices, such as the anti-nuclear movement.

Activists as custodians

Grounded in their identity as social justice advocates, WA ANM activists perceived themselves to be ‘custodians of the land’, thereby ensuring the sustainability of the (West Australian) lifestyle for all citizens and future generations. Donna captured this concept in her impromptu speech at the 2010 Uranium Conference rally by declaring:

I am a mother, a singer and an actor...and now, they call me an activist. What I am, is a caretaker of my country. (Donna, public speech, 21st July 2010)

She thereby illustrated that the custodian role was not consciously chosen or adopted by activists, but instead emerged as an intrinsic part of their belief system and their commitment to society. The following quotes further illustrate this deeply embedded sense of duty and love for life:

We care and we are so alarmed and so worried about nuclear stuff because we love life. It's precious...That fear and horror [nuclear disaster] is [...] motivating us because we're wanting to preserve and protect. (Verity, interview, 28th April 2011)

You know, we're going to be somebody's ancestors one day and I think we want to think about what sort of legacy we're leaving for the whole of life on earth. (Julie, interview, 15th April 2011)

These quotes emphasise activists' deeply engrained sense of duty to protect the natural environment and living standards for future generations. Their focus was not on immediate gratification and personal gain, but on longevity and the living standard of the wider society, based on their personal values and understanding of what (future) communities should look like. Two major drivers inform activists' identification with the role of custodian or guardian: firstly, their commitment to “future generations”, and secondly, their respect for the natural environment.

Driven by a sense of duty and self-imposed obligation to society, activists positioned themselves as to speak on behalf of those communities and individuals whose voices have traditionally been suppressed. Simultaneously, they provided a platform to enable marginalised groups of citizens to be heard, become active and get involved. Much of this commitment was linked to spirituality and strong bonds with the (West) Australian Indigenous community. Activists were inspired and driven by

Indigenous campaigners' dreamtime stories³⁴, which commonly emphasise respect for the land, their ancestors and the need to assume responsibility for resources that have been obtained from their land. For example, both the Australian (ANFA) and the Western Australian Nuclear Free Alliance (WANFA) emphasised "Wanti" (roughly translated to "Leave it (the poison) in the ground"), referring to the fact that many uranium deposits are located on sacred sites. For example, Yeelirrie, which was expected to be one of the first uranium mines to go into production in Western Australia by 2014, lies in an area that has historically been avoided by traditional owners, due to its association with 'danger' (in the local Aboriginal language 'yeelirrie' means "place of death"). Local campaigners were conscious of the fact that toxins may not only negatively impact on the health and lifestyle of local communities, but also on those people living close to nuclear reactors or being effected by nuclear weapons overseas. As custodians of the Australian land and thereby the resources extracted from it, they automatically felt responsible for the possible impact of Australian uranium on other nations and communities.

Equally, WA ANM activists' concern regarding nuclear issues reached well beyond the role of Australian uranium and the impact that uranium mining or nuclear energy would have on them personally. Activists expressed concern for people affected by depleted nuclear weapons in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Balkans. Equally, they were very concerned about the involvement Australian uranium had in the 2011 Fukushima reactor meltdown. This again emphasises activists' holistic concern for standards of living, equality and sustainability of lifestyles beyond their personal and temporal spheres.

Activists were very aware of the pro-industry sentiment in Western Australia and the reduced size, visibility and potential relevance of the anti-nuclear movement, particularly in comparison to Palm Sunday days, when thousands of people took to the streets in opposition to nuclear power. Seeing themselves as custodians of the land, they considered it their obligation to hold corporations responsible and accountable, to question decision makers' motivations, to look behind what activists in this study referred to as "PR" (implying misleading messages), and to continuously keep watch until the public sentiment changed in relation to uranium

³⁴ The Dreaming, or dreamtime, for Australian Indigenous people refers to a time when the Ancestral Beings moved across the land and created life and significant geographic features. Via dreamtime, or dreaming stories, important knowledge, cultural values and belief systems are passed on to later generations. Through song, dance, painting and storytelling which express the dreaming stories, Aborigines have maintained a link with the Dreaming from ancient times to today, creating a rich cultural heritage (Australian Government, 2008).

mining and the use of nuclear energy. Joy explained the reasoning behind her continued involvement in the movement, despite its decreasing visibility and public support:

I remember Bill Williams, who is a doctor from the Medical Association for the Prevention of War saying a couple of years ago, look, something's going to come out of left field. We have to do our campaigning, we have to keep lobbying, we have to be there with the arguments, but he said I've a feeling it's going to be something completely different which comes in and actually sabotages the industry, and it's the industry itself, like these accidents. (Joy, interview, 15th March 2011)

The tsunami and consequent nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi plant in March 2011 (Alford, 2011b; Borger, 2011; Nancarrow, 2011) was one of those “out of left field” events, which suddenly shifted the spotlight onto the safety of nuclear power. The incident gave the anti-nuclear campaign new meaning and focus, and generated new interest from the public and the media in anti-nuclear arguments. At the same time, however, it rendered many WA ANM activists immobile, as they watched on in horror. They were consumed by the effort to keep up to date with the developments, but refused to exploit the spotlight on nuclear energy to further their own cause. This refusal was linked to a deep sympathy for the Japanese people and respect for fellow anti-nuclear activists in Japan. A further influencing factor was the acknowledgement that Australia had been selling uranium to TEPCO, the operator of the effected power stations (Conservation Council of Western Australia, 2011b). Hence, Australians, as original owners of the toxic material, were assumed to be responsible for the aftermath, at least in the eyes of the WA ANM. Despite an increased focus on the viability of nuclear energy in the Australian public sphere, by the end of this study the incident had not translated into a revival of the anti-nuclear mass movement.

In summary, WA ANM activists perceived themselves to be custodians of the environment, the West Australian lifestyle and equal access to quality living standards. As custodians they were driven by a sense of duty to society to raise awareness of potential dangers associated with uranium and nuclear energy. They were also committed to monitoring corporate practices and to ensuring the survival of the movement until world events might reignite the focus onto anti-nuclear issues, resulting in permanent (legislative) change.

Activists as facilitators of a democratic society

This chapter has provided insight into how WA ANM activists perceived themselves and their role and responsibilities within society. A deep concern with and belief in social justice has emerged as a personal and collective driving force behind activist action. Activists identified themselves as challengers, community educators and custodians, all of which are motivated by a commitment to ensure the sustainability of the West Australian lifestyle and equal access to opportunities. However, in addition, activists described themselves as enablers of action and facilitators of democratic decision making, which is discussed over the following paragraphs.

Based on interviews and observations, I argue that activists' focus is not on securing a greater share of power for themselves, but on equipping the community with the tools, knowledge and desire to become active/take action. Here the focus is on the outcome, rather than personal gains, benefits or the promise of re-election. Despite acknowledging the existence of different spheres of influence, WA ANM activists generally perceived themselves to be lacking "real power" (Alycia, interview, 28th February 2011), particularly in comparison to the State Government and the mining corporations they challenged. Alycia, one of the key organisers during the course of this study, described anti-nuclear activists as being "at the bottom of the rung" (Alycia, informal conversation, 19th February 2011) in terms of power and influence in Western Australia. As such, anti-nuclear activists saw themselves as facilitators and change agents, rather than leaders or principal executors of social change.

In 1970, the American Economist Milton Friedman defined the "one and only social responsibility of business" as to "engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game" (Friedman, 2007, p. 179). Despite an increased focus on corporate social responsibility (CSR) by contemporary businesses, this basic premise has not changed. Multi-national mining corporations are essentially driven by a focus on profit maximisation and return and investment for their shareholders. They justify their license to operate in (Western) Australia based on the creation of employment opportunities, tax or royalty payments and related economic contributions (see chapter 7, page 183). Whilst these may be legitimate reasons, their significant share of power, coupled with a pro-mining government agenda and a limited but industry-supportive media landscape, have resulted in the marginalising of alternative perspectives and voices. It would be naïve to assume that a small group of activists or a local community can influence a

corporation's support for and interest in certain minerals (such as uranium ore), as long as the project itself predicts a respectable return on investment. This is particularly relevant in the context of this study, as opposition to uranium mining was primarily based on impact on remote communities and long term environmental damage, which relates to a point in time beyond the project lifespan and potentially the corporation's presence in the country. The anti-nuclear campaign thus lacked relevance and immediacy for WA's largely city based population.

The power of the community

Regardless of believing in the power of one and the ability of a single conversation to ignite a "spark" and inspire action, the WA ANM acknowledged that the key to a successful campaign depends on community support (see Figure 7.3 The Activism Influence Flow on page 225). By mobilising public support, the WA ANM generates social capital, hence is able to draw on "those actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of...relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition...which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital" (Bourdieu 1997, p. 51). Project costs, the declining global demand for uranium ore and a continued decline in the commodity's prices since its peak in 2007 are arguably the only factors that would motivate a halting or abandonment of mining projects. This was seen in the case of BHP Billiton, which first sold its WA based Yeelirrie mine to Cameco in mid-2012 (Burrell, 2012) followed by an announcement less than a week later that the expansion of its Olympic Dam operation, the world's largest uranium mine, had been abandoned (BHP shelves Olympic Dam as profit falls a third, 2012). However, without relying on a major nuclear disaster or corporations' declining interest in uranium ore, activists know that the only way to re-establish a ban on uranium mining in WA is via legislative changes:

We're all out here in voter-land, talking away to each other and voting when we get in to voting, because we've got enormous power there and in the end, if there were more of us with more people convinced our way, we could change governments and if we could change governments, then we can change laws of the country. If we can change the laws of the country, we can really start knocking the future into shape and there are lots of moves going in that direction, lots and lots and lots of people working in that direction, organisations and individuals. So you've got to really feel hopeful that we can bring change. (Julie, interview, 15th April 2011)

As facilitators of a democratic society, WA ANM activists perceived it their responsibility to interest, educate and consequently mobilise a crucial mass of voters to ensure uranium mining would be recognised by the State Opposition as an election issue. This was achieved in June 2011, when the WA Labor party agreed to endorse a “no uranium mining stance” as part of their policy platform for the 2013 State Elections³⁵. They thereby provided an alternative to the unequivocal industry supportive Liberal Party agenda. I argue that as facilitators of social change, the WA ANM provides events and actions that challenge existing opinions and belief systems. It is here that activists impart to the public subject specific information to provide a broader context and deeper understanding. Donna compared the work of the WA ANM to a “preproduction”:

We're just doing all the ground work, and getting the information out to people now, because a lot of Western Australians don't know what's going on, they don't know the truth of the matter, they haven't researched it enough, their heads are buried in the sand. (Donna, 17th May 2011)

Activists therefore did not solely see themselves as educators, but as change agents, by providing easily adaptable tools and targeted actions that simplify participation in democratic processes. Prominent examples in this study were online petitions, pre-worded letters to the local Member of Parliament, calls for letter drops and other opportunities to get involved, which made the process of taking action straightforward and effortless, with minimal demands on personal time and resources. Activists further shared not only their subject specific knowledge, but also their understanding of political processes, hence simplifying “becoming active” further. As such, the WA ANM provided the platform to enable further action amongst likeminded people, with the aim of bringing about long-term change. As a platform, the WA ANM has the ability to bring together a wide range of individuals, special interest groups, Indigenous communities, NGOs, unions and political parties that may usually not work together, but share a common interest in a permanent ban on uranium mining and Australia's involvement in nuclear energy. Anti-nuclear activists were therefore not the initiators of change, but instead the connectors, enablers and facilitators.

Successful or not, I argue that activists like the WA ANM perform a crucial role in modern democratic decision making processes. By providing alternative

³⁵ Note: this has since been altered to a “no *new* mines” policy within days of then Opposition Leader Eric Ripper being replaced by Mark McGowan (McGowan, 2012)

perspectives that challenge the status quo they add to the multitude of opinions and perspectives that characterise a functioning democracy. At the time of this study, the significant share of power held by the resources sector, supported by the State Government and reinforced via the Australian media, had effectively drowned out any alternative voices, dismissing environmental and community concerns as less valid than economic prosperity. By opposing the current state of affairs and the (West) Australian neoliberal, resources driven agenda, activists invite community members to assess their belief systems, assumptions and ultimately their priorities when casting their vote in the next election. Activists thereby facilitate active citizenship, informed decision making and contribute to effective democratic processes. This role is particularly crucial in the light of widespread political apathy and disenchantment with political processes, as noted by activists in this study, as well as within the political environment (Fulkner, 2005; Goot, 2002).

In summary, based on the three roles identified earlier in the chapter and their identity as social justice advocates, activists perform a fourth function in society: that of the democratic enabler or facilitator. The WA ANM lacks sufficient power sources to effectively challenge the dominance of the State's resources industry. Instead, it provides the WA community with the information, tools and opportunities that have the potential to lead to permanent social change, particularly at a legislative level. As challengers of the status quo, activists perform a crucial role in modern democratic societies, enabling informed decision making and active participation in political processes. As such, the WA ANM's actual source of power lies within enabling and mobilising the (voting) community, which underwrites the movement's qualitative and quantitative share of social, and hence symbolic capital.

In challenging the status quo and society's dominant ideology, activist groups like the WA ANM perform a crucial role in civil society, by enabling participation in democratic decision making. This is particularly relevant within the context of an increasingly oligopolised and advertising-reliant mass media industry.

Chapter summary

The descriptor "WA ANM activists" has been used throughout this study for simplification purposes. Although its collective identity is marked by non-violence, collective decision making and civil disobedience, the collective label is misleading, as the activist experience is highly personal, individualistic and multifaceted. Furthermore, anti-nuclear issues are usually not activists' sole focus. Instead, they

tend to pursue a multitude of interests and issues, which are prioritised based on perceived urgency and personal impact. Hence their identities are informed by a multiplicity of subject and interest positions. The fluid nature of the WA ANM further emphasises the difference between grassroots movements and conventional organisations.

However, a deep grounding and individualistic belief in social justice has emerged as a common driving force behind activist action. Data indicates that becoming an activist is not a conscious decision, but a reflection on an individual's perception of their role in and responsibility towards society. Individual activists are not motivated by personal recognition, but by their social conscience and perceived need that an issue needs to be addressed and rectified. This identity of activists as social justice advocates is shaped in relation to corporations and the community, both locally and globally. Here, activism is not perceived as a rebellious act, but as a democratic responsibility.

A further facet of the activist identity relates to the facilitator and educator role, where activists aim to foster active civic engagement and societal change. As such, their self-defined role in society differs sharply from that bestowed upon them by the traditional PR literature. Yet another facet relates to the role of custodian of the land. In the context of the WA ANM, all of these facets of the activist identity are motivated by a commitment to ensure the sustainability of the West Australian lifestyle and equal access to opportunities. Activists compare their role to that of a watchdog. Perhaps the most important facet, however, relates to the role of Enabler of action and/or Facilitator of democratic decision making, which points to the crucial role that activists perform in society. This is independent of their campaign success, relating to their ability to challenge the status quo and hold up a mirror to cause society to reflect on its values and implications for the future of the environment and the WA lifestyle. They thus challenge citizens to engage knowledgeably in democratic processes.

Chapter 9

Discussion and conclusion

Based on the WA ANM, previous chapters have examined what activists do (Chapter 6), the relationships they establish and draw on to build (social) capital (Chapter 7) and how they perceive their role and identity as activists (Chapter 8). This chapter theorises the role that activists play in modern democracies by synthesising and discussing these earlier findings in relation to their context (Chapter 2) and the extant scholarship (Chapter 3), by drawing on Bourdieu's *Theory of Practice* (Chapter 4). It addresses a number of questions that have emerged throughout this study, including: do activists perceive themselves as professional communicators? Do they consider a compromise with corporate demands to be an "excellent" outcome of their efforts? To what extent is activism as a practice monolithic, as implied in the existing literature? And what are the societal consequences of activism?

This study challenges the convenient notion in the extant literature that 'best practice' in public relations involves a compromise between activists and organisations, as well as critical scholars' assertion that activists may be studied as public relations professionals in their own right. I argue that it is misleading to label the activities of grassroots activists like the WA ANM as "public relations", as this ignores the inherent resource discrepancies between activists and corporations and hence their strategic (communications) capabilities. Also, I assert that activists perform a role in society that is fundamentally different to that of conventional, corporate PR departments. I argue that activism as a practice needs to be studied, analysed and conceptualised beyond the confines of a single campaign or issue. This is because activists perceive themselves to be social justice advocates, who challenge the status quo and consequently encourage citizens to become engaged in democratic processes. Activists thus actively contribute to an involved society and democratic decision making processes.

Revisiting Bourdieu: The role of activism in society

The data suggest that activists' definition of their social role is different to that bestowed on them in PR literature. In applying Bourdieu's *Theory of Practice* to the insights gained into the WA ANM, a broader and more significant role emerges in

relation to activists' function in society. This thesis focuses on the power discrepancy between West Australia's mining sector and activists based on financial resources. In her discussion of the implications of the risk society for public relations, Jones (2002) argues that "it is often more relevant to look at symbolic rather than economic power" (p. 52). This becomes apparent in the context of this study. Translating into prestige, legitimacy or a "glowing reputation" (Webb, et al., 2002), Bourdieu describes symbolic capital as more than simply the sum of other types of capital, but a "power which enables one to obtain the equivalent of what is obtained through force (whether physical or economic)" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 170). In this case, the mining industry may possess considerable economic capital, however, it becomes apparent that its symbolic influence by far exceeds its economic means. The WA resources industry represents more than the goods it produces and the job it creates, achieving an iconic status in Western Australia and beyond as the driver behind Australia's continued strong economic performance. Embedded in its existence are symbolic meanings, which represent a version of the Australian lifestyle that is to be desired and replicated. From a symbolic perspective, the mining sector enables and facilitates an affluent lifestyle; including large houses, private yachts, exclusive education, extensive overseas holidays and a high disposable income. It has thereby elevated Australia above other nations in terms of economic performance and job security.

This symbolic representation may not necessarily represent reality. A number of other industries, such as education and tourism, contribute to the country's economic performance, particularly in terms of job creation (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2010). Equally, not everyone benefits from the mining boom, particularly as utility prices and other costs of living continue to rise in Western Australia (O'Brien, 2011) and record levels of homelessness are reported in the State's north-west (Mining boom blamed for worst homeless rate, 2009). However, in the case of the mining industry, their "version of reality" has been communicated effectively, subsidised by pro-mining politicians and further amplified via the news media. The resources sector thereby sells more than commodities; it sells a version of the Australian lifestyle that has received widespread support. It is a lifestyle focused on disposable income rather than engagement with nature; highly paid 'fly in, fly out' job opportunities rather than quality family time; and support for commercial agendas rather than community concerns. Bourdieu refers to this type of power as "almost magical" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 170) and highly effective as West Australian citizens are not dominated or passive recipients. Instead, they are

complicit, as they themselves believe in the legitimacy of the resources industry's claims and its right to largely control the State's and country's agenda. In doing so, they further re-enforce their own, marginalised role as labour force and commodities, "traded" for the duration of the skills shortage, but with limited employment opportunities beyond the resources boom.

Bourdieu argues that the exercising of symbolic power leads to what he coined symbolic violence (or domination). Although by definition not physical, but with support of those individuals it is exercised upon, it may take the form of citizens being unable to pay rising power bills or to afford housing, in return for the perceived honour of belonging to the country's "powerhouse economy". It may also be in the form of compulsory land acquisition and limited access to traditional sites for Aboriginal communities, justified by continued need for mining royalties. Equally, it may include the destruction of heritage sites and limited natural diversity for future generations to enjoy, as preferred mining sites are located in national parks. Finally, it may lead to diminished health and life expectancy in exchange for the creation of employment opportunities in remote communities. By challenging the values of an economy driven by the resources boom and the representation of reality of the mining industry, WA ANM activists effectively hold a mirror up to society, by encouraging citizens to re-assess their priorities and individual role in society. By acknowledging the vast power discrepancies, it thus becomes activists' main challenge to convincingly communicate their alternative version of reality. However, I argue that it is irrelevant if activists are successful or not in achieving their campaign goals (here: a permanent ban on uranium mining). By challenging belief systems, values and assumptions, activists like the WA ANM seek to encourage active citizenship and facilitate democratic decision making.

Are activists public relations professionals in their own right?

Study findings indicate that activists' alliance lies with the cause and not the organisation or group they may represent at a given point in time. Their communication efforts are driven by passion and personal commitment, not loyalty to an organisation or the perceived need to meet a job description. The integral role of personal interest, passion and perceived urgency to act, illustrates why activists, like those involved in the WA ANM, move seemingly effortlessly between different causes, projects and initiatives. As a result, anti-nuclear grassroots activists are not concerned about reputation management, or the performance or prolonged existence of any affiliated organisation. The activist group or organisation is a

means to an end. It performs a function at a given point in time to unite likeminded individuals, but can easily be dismantled and re-formed if necessary. Here, a key source of capital is the sum of personal commitment and passion, as opposed to strategic advantages to be gained as a result of an affiliated organisation's societal standing or brand reputation. Without a reputation to guard, movements like the WA ANM do not seek to avoid conflict and controversy. Instead, they are comfortable with confronting assumptions and publicly challenging the status quo.

As the public relations industry has evolved over the past decades, the focus has increasingly shifted from tactical initiatives—such as the production of brochures, websites, newsletters or flyers, an isolated media stunt, or the hosting of an event—to strategic communications concerned with long-term change, objective setting and consistent messaging. In contrast, the findings of this study highlight that activists do not explicitly engage strategically. Firstly, competing demands, such as the need to establish bonding capital (page 182) and maintain existing activists' energy levels and commitment (page 171 - 176) does negatively impact on strategic resources (most noticeably their ability to raise funds) and may furthermore result in actions and messages that detract from, weaken or even contradict the strategic goals of activist organisations. Many of the tactics used and communication styles applied by activists do not mirror those used in modern public relations departments. They may therefore be easily misunderstood, or even dismissed by professional audiences as immature, unprofessional and insignificant. A characteristic example within the context of this study is the extensive use of humour (see Chapter 6), which performs specific functions within the movement, but also impacts on activists' ability to influence external audiences, in particular business representatives, politicians and other industry-based power-holders, who are not familiar with humour and satire as a communications tool.

Secondly, the perpetually fluid nature of movements limits activists' message control and planning capabilities. Due to activist organisations' changeable structure and flexible composition of talent and resources in the form of volunteers, it is impossible to develop and guard a grassroots group's brand or image. Similarly, it becomes difficult to ensure the distribution of consistent communication messages, as individuals are not only enabled, but in fact encouraged to utilise their personal initiative. Commonly, this happens without sufficient resources for permanent organisation members to provide advice, nor knowledge of, or access to, campaign strategies and tactics, which tend to be developed by a small number of core activists. Hence, individuals' initiative may still cohere with the organisation's

broader intentions and tacit goals (i.e. an end to the nuclear cycle); however, the execution and message focus may dilute, or even contradict, the group's strategic positioning (e.g. non-endorsed use of violence or aggression, a focus on nuclear weapons as opposed to a re-introduction of the uranium mining ban, etc.). From an audience perspective this type of communication may appear more honest and genuine, hence elicit more support than carefully crafted corporate public relations messages. Equally, this type of "open source" activism encourages creativity. However, it also results in a multitude of spokespeople and the dissemination of contradictory messages, as activists add their personal emphasis, interpretation and style. Finally, the preference for consensus-driven and collective decision making may result in creative output and an involved activist community, but simultaneously leads to a lack of ownership and clearly defined responsibilities, thus negatively impacting on the setting of clear objectives and the meeting of deadlines.

Finally, anti-nuclear activists may feel strongly about their adopted issue(s) and set out to convey their point of view. However, their focus is on engagement and information sharing (see Chapter 8, page 252), rather than persuasion with the aim of gaining a competitive advantage, which would be typical within a (corporate) public relations context. Findings of this study suggest that movement activists, like the WA ANM, perceive themselves as global citizens, driven by their social conscience, which encourages them to promote informed, democratic decision making and civic engagement (see Chapter 8, page 253).

Study findings highlight that activists define public relations as activities undertaken exclusively by governments and, in particular, the corporate sector, i.e. those entities that already hold a dominant share of power and have the resources to employ professionally trained PR staff, as well as professional counsel and representation who unequivocally represent their perspective and business interests. Activists understand public relations as not only comprising of (tactical) communication activities, but also as operating at a macro level in order to increase an organisation's existing visibility, share of influence and agenda setting power. Moreover, activists consider public relations as a means of silencing alternative voices, with the aim of ensuring a commercially beneficial outcome for the funding entity (organisation or industry). Like Bourdieu, activists perceive public relations as a self-serving activity, limited to the already powerful and introduced by the corporate sector with the intention of hindering, undermining and essentially sabotaging democratic decision making (see Chapter 7, page 205 – 208). Dismissing the value of "glossy brochures and flash presentations", activists believe

their ultimate weapon is what they refer to as “the truth” which stands in contrast to the “corporate spin machine” (see Chapter 8, page 261-262). In this context, the role of the PR practitioner is perceived as a direct contrast or opposite to that of the activist, because it represents the self-serving interest of an organisation, rather than a “common good”. PR professionals are considered to speak, act and further consolidate power on behalf of those who already control a dominant share of capital. In contrast, activists set out to empower and equip those people in society whose voices they consider are being suppressed, ignored and marginalised. Activists thereby perceive their activities and role in society as antithetical to those of the corporate PR function, by valuing listening skills and promoting alternative views to their own, rather than relying on what they perceive as corporate “token gestures”, such as community consultation for project approval purposes. Hence, my findings align with and build on Demetrious’ (2006) description of public relations—or PR—as a loaded, derogatory term within the activism context, with connotations of a self-serving and capitalist activity.

Findings challenge the claim by some critical PR scholars that activists should be understood and consequently studied as public relations professionals in their own right. Instead, the data indicate that activists’ approach to professional communication differs from those of modern corporations because of reasons other than merely the limited availability of economic resources. Funding may influence, but does not exclusively justify differences in strategic capabilities, the underlying motivation and the choice of communication styles. Activists may be effective communicators, but the evidence provided in this study illustrates that the practice of public relations is fundamentally different from their own activities.

As suggested by critical scholars (Chapter 2), there is unquestionably a need to expand critical works within the discipline to acknowledge the role and impact of public relations beyond its commercial context, as well as to justify and strengthen the existence of public relations as a scholarly discipline in its own right. However, considering philosophical and resource differences as detailed in this study, I argue that it would be overly simplistic and essentially misleading to label grassroots activists, like the WA ANM, as PR professionals in their own right. This would imply that activists’ communication and campaign abilities could be benchmarked against their commercial counterparts in a meaningful way. This assumes comparable levels of knowledge, education, expertise, strategic capabilities and resources.

In society, industry and higher education, public relations is understood as almost exclusively restricted to organisations and governments, which are resources rich, i.e. those entities that possess sufficient capital to employ paid staff with specific skill sets, training and experience in the field. In Chapter 3, I argue that public relations scholars have predominantly focused on reputation management (e.g. Doorley & Garcia, 2006; Hutton, 1999), persuasion (e.g. L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006) and strategic communications support for the organisation's overarching business objectives. PR textbooks and scholarly research may refer to the 'boundary-spanning' potential of the PR function (e.g. Moss, Warnaby, Sykes, & Thomas, 1998; J. White & Dozier, 1992) and practitioners' role as the ethical compass and social conscience of an organisation (Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002; Moloney, 2005, 2006; Parsons, 2008). However, ultimately, PR staff are employed to deliver specific and measurable outcomes related to corporate goals. Consequently, the PR function is required to demonstrate its value, guaranteeing return on investment (ROI) and ensuring its contribution to the organisation's bottom line (e.g. J. E. Grunig, 2006; Harrison, 2011; Mahoney, 2012; Oliver, 2010). In larger not-for-profit organisations a similar arrangement may exist in the form of a staff member having to fundraise the equivalent of his or her salary. However, data from this study suggests that grassroots movements are devoid of any comparable requirement.

Most modern corporations exist primarily for the maximisation of profits. This may include the negotiation of mutual benefits with communities and stakeholder groups on whom their activities have an impact. However, this notion dismisses the claims and ignores the voices of those groups and individuals that in the corporation's eye do not possess sufficient symbolic capital to be considered powerful enough to warrant meaningful engagement and consideration. The data provided in this study suggests that activists perform a profoundly different role in society to that of corporations and their public relations departments.

To what extent is activism monolithic or diverse?

The study findings have illustrated the limitations of labelling activism as a monolithic concept and practice, as it is currently applied in public relations literature. As discussed in Chapter 7 and visually represented in Illustration 7.1 (page 194), social movements like the WA ANM consist of a varied range of groups and organisations, ranging from established NGOs to groups with a single-issue focus to "creative collectives" of individuals. It is important to emphasise that a visual representation such as 7.1 can only claim to represent a snapshot, from a

specific perspective at a given point in time, as the groups, organisations and individuals that make up an activist movement consistently alter their position in relation to each other, due to changing demands, priorities and personal preferences. In addition, movements and grassroots activists rely on a network of affiliated groups, organisations and individuals whose communication styles, knowledge, resources, skills, decision making styles and, ultimately, power are equally varied and largely dependent on the particular context (or field) they are operating in. Consequently, within a given moment in time, each 'activist cluster' performs a slightly different role that in its own way supports the overall cause.

Findings furthermore highlight that the motivations and perceptions of activism vary amongst individuals (see Chapter 8, page 215), signifying that activist groups are not homogenous entities. This in turn further emphasises the diverse nature of the activist community as a whole. The data indicate that grassroots activists' identity is fundamentally different to that of established, international NGOs, such as for example the World Wildlife Fund, Greenpeace or Oxfam. For example, although considered an activist organisation based on the definitions provided in Chapter 3 (page 66), the WWF is an international, well-resourced organisation, with strong industry ties, extensive networks and a decision making structure that more closely resembles WA's mining corporations than the WA ANM. The core principles and foci of commercial PR can be found within such a large, well established "activist organisation" (see Literature Review, page 67). Consequently, international NGOs' structure, communication expertise and management style resemble more closely those of corporations than grassroots activists. A further key differentiating factor between grassroots movements like the WA ANM and NGOs such as the WWF is the latter's strong emphasis on negotiating a compromise, or entering a partnership, with industry representatives. This preparedness to work with industry or corporate representatives varies between NGOs, which furthermore emphasises the complexity of what is inclusively labelled "activism" in the existing public relations literature.

The findings thereby illustrate the complex nature of the activist label and the limitation of applying it as a monolithic concept. As illustrated in Chapter 3, current definitions of activism in PR literature are broad, generic and vague, to the extent that they become meaningless and difficult to operationalise. Activists are referred to as individuals that "exert pressure" (M. F. Smith, 2005, p. 5) on others, "feel strongly about an issue" (Holtzhausen, 2007, p. 375) and organise in groups of "two or more individuals [...] in order to influence" (L. A. Grunig, 1992a, p. 504; L. A.

Grunig, et al., 2002, p. 446). These universal descriptors essentially ignore the complexities of activism and dismiss the diversity in size, motivations, communication styles, ways of organising, networks, power, visibility and access to resources of activists, to name a few. Indirectly, they imply that international NGOs, like Greenpeace and Amnesty International, can not only be studied in the same way, but are by implication comparable to other forms of activism, such as localised community groups or context-driven, heterogeneous social movements, such as the Arab Spring or Occupy Wall Street³⁶. The implied monolithic activist concept fails to recognise the variety in activities. It assumes to simultaneously capture violent protests, hunger strikes and self-immolations by Tibetan Buddhist monks, as well as non-violent rallies, street theatre and performances by the WA ANM's Clown Army. "Activists" participating in any of these activities may all be passionate about their adopted cause, but their resources, abilities, motivations and communication styles vary greatly.

The data draw attention to the way in which public relations scholars have primarily limited research into activism to established NGOs (Chapter 3, page 67), thus further failing to recognise the diversity encompassed by the term 'activism', to the detriment of less accessible, visible or convenient examples of activism. From a public relations research perspective, not much is known about how social movements and grassroots activists communicate and engage—if at all—with the corporations whose license to operate they challenge. PR scholars have highlighted that established NGOs and not for profit organisations have increasingly adopted centralised approaches to communication modelled on corporations, which has led to the conclusion that they can be studied in a similar way (page 60). In contrast, grassroots activism materialises in response to situations and issues and hence often lacks the benefit of established networks and resources, which may result in it being less convenient and attractive to study. Scholars may also be less familiar with or aware of non-branded examples of activist organisations, or fail to identify suitable study participants due to their lack of familiarity, access and insider knowledge. However, research convenience is not a valid justification for ignoring the inherent diversity amongst activist groups.

Based on my findings I propose the following definition of "activism":

³⁶ Note: although I am using the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street labels, I acknowledge that in both cases there is no coherent identity, but multiple incarnations, ways of expression and emphasis across countries and localities.

Activism involves individuals, groups and movements, often loosely and fluidly connected, who undertake a range of planned and spontaneous communication activities with the aim of raising citizens' awareness of, providing information about, and confronting, challenging or reinforcing the existing distribution of power in society. Individual activists seek to motivate citizens to critically evaluate their existing knowledge, priorities and values related to one or more causes or issues, thereby encouraging and facilitating civic engagement in the democratic process, which they position not as a right, but a responsibility.

How do activists overcome resource discrepancies?

Bourdieu suggests that society consists of different "fields of struggle", in which actors compete to maintain or challenge the status quo. This ongoing tension is a result of the unequal distribution of resources, or capital, which perpetuates existing power relationships (Chapter 4, page 99). Considering their lack of economic capital, which Bourdieu explains as the resource that carries most weight, and the existing power discrepancies between the mining industry and the WA ANM (Chapter 2, page 43), this study set out to examine how activists overcome their weakened position by accumulating sufficient capital to ensure their voices and alternative perspectives are heard by the West Australian community.

According to Bourdieu's *Theory of Practice*, capital extends beyond the notion of material assets to resources that may be social, cultural or symbolic. However, Ihlen (2009) emphasises that certain types of capital may be held in higher regard in some fields than in others. Whilst economic capital in particular is recognised within the corporate and business fields, the findings of this study indicate that activists value other forms of capital beside economic resources. This differentiates them from established organisations, and furthermore enables them to be effective in their own right.

Due to their lack of economic resources, grassroots activists may be disregarded by the business sector for their lack of symbolic power. Consequently, meaningful engagement between corporations and activists is limited, as I discuss in more detail later in this chapter. However, within the political field, social capital (i.e. networks) is predominantly valued, as political parties and individual candidates rely on the support of and endorsement by their constituents in order to claim or maintain power at a local, state or national level. Hence, despite their lack of economic capital, activists like the WA ANM operate within the political field, where

they have the capacity to influence legislative decision making based on the quality and quantity of their support networks and support.

As discussed in Chapter 4, Bourdieu asserts that the different fields which characterise society are essentially homologous and subsumed under the overarching field of power. Struggles in the political field thus have homologous effects on others, such as the business sector. For activists, this signifies that increased power and recognition of the activist community and their adopted “issue” (i.e. uranium mining/ nuclear energy) in the field of politics may lead to legislative changes, which in turn may impact on related fields, resulting in, for example, tightened environmental policies, increased project taxes or mining restrictions that will impact on corporations and their long term viability. Politicians’ ultimate aim is to gain or maintain their position of power. Hence, in the political sphere an issue will only be recognised and addressed if there is sufficient groundswell that forces politicians to take a public position and possibly to develop a corresponding policy, by offering an opportunity to increase, or threatening their current share of power and influence. The data therefore suggests that in order for activists to generate change, they need to mobilise the wider community to not only engage with their (campaign) issues, but to adopt them and make them a priority for their local Member(s) of Parliament (see Illustration 7.3, page 225). I therefore conclude that social capital lies at the core of activist success.

Social capital refers to “those actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of...relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition...which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital” (Bourdieu 1997, p. 51). Within the activist context it represents the sum of resources, tangible or virtual, that an activist group can effectively mobilise. This includes the volume of capital (economic, cultural and/or symbolic) possessed by each of those with whom activists are connected, either via mutual acquaintance, recognition, or in a formalised relationship, such as membership, participation in a particular working party or employment. However, it is not solely the actual size of the network that is important in activists’ quest to challenge existing power relationships, but also the quality of those included in its “nodes”. Support by and access to senior politicians and community leaders further impacts on the position and symbolic power of an issue group and its support community.

While social capital performs a crucial role, cultural capital (i.e. knowledge and expertise) is similarly important to activists' success, as the support for activist issues relies on the format, relevance and reliability of the information provided to citizens. Activists impart and disseminate their cultural capital via brochures, flyers, opinion pieces, speeches and reports in an effort to foster the development of cultural capital by likeminded individuals, thus increasing the totality of knowledge resources that enable them to challenge the status quo.

What is the role of activists in society?

The focus of this study is on activist communication and the notion of power. An underlying research question was: how do WA anti-nuclear activists engage with proponents of nuclear energy and major power holders, represented within this context predominantly by mining corporations with an interest in uranium ore exploration? The latter question emerged as a result of the literature review (Chapter 3), which highlighted the notion of a compromise between both activists and corporations as one of the key assumptions in public relations scholarship, in particular in relationship to "best practice" or "excellent public relations" (page 63).

However, findings indicate that in reality the level of meaningful engagement between grassroots activists and corporations is minimal. Arguably, this may be due to corporations perceiving that activists lack (economic) capital, particularly in contrast to the corporations whose license to operate they challenge. This assumption may lead to activists being dismissed by corporations and governments as a non-key stakeholder group. Additionally, findings highlight that activists' communications styles and tactics vary from those of corporate PR departments. The use of humour, song and street theatre (see Chapter 6) may further add to corporate decision makers' perception of activists as unprofessional and ineffective, hence corporations' failure to acknowledge their legitimacy and thus refusal to engage. However, most crucially, findings highlight that contrary to prominent assumptions in public relations scholarship, grassroots activists do not seek engagement with corporations. Instead, they may even actively avoid being consulted or encouraged to enter any form of relationship or engagement based on compromise.

Activists are sceptical of community consultation and briefing processes, which they claim are misleading "PR exercises" and essentially a means to imply endorsement of corporate decisions by a wide range of stakeholders. Although, if invited, activists

may attend corporate meetings, they do not engage in direct communication with corporate decision makers as a means of bringing about change. Like the corporate entity, they have strong views and a position from which they are not likely to shift. In many cases, they do not intend to compromise or cooperate with corporations. Instead, the assumed corporation-activist relationship is marked by irreconcilable differences between activists' belief systems on one hand, and corporate business goals on the other. At their core, businesses are motivated by the desire to make a profit. If activists object to the source of that income, such as the mining and commercial use of uranium, as in the case of the WA ANM, there is no room for a compromise of a "middle ground". Activists therefore define their role in society as fundamentally different to that of corporations. Findings indicate that grassroots activists deliberately remain well outside what Stokes and Rubin (2010) refer to as the 'zone of compromise'. They do this to prevent being co-opted into supporting those practices which they were opposed to in the first place. Cooperation with corporations would result in damage to the activist reputation and identity, as well as the potential loss of activists' support networks. Consequently, grassroots activists like the WA ANM tend to dismiss those advocacy groups and organisations that work together with industry to negotiate a partnership or compromise as contradicting their public ideology and compromising their integrity, morality and/or principles in exchange for personal (or organisational) gain.

Consequently, the findings challenge one of the key assumptions in PR scholarship. Public relations scholars have traditionally maintained that "excellent" public relations is based on symmetrical communication (L. A. Grunig, et al., 2002). Within the activism context, this has been equated with fostering long-term relationships and the establishment of a "win-win solution" or "zone of compromise" between activists and the organisations they challenge. This study has highlighted that contrary to the largely conceptual understanding of the activist-corporation relationship in traditional PR literature, in reality the engagement between corporations and social movements like the WA ANM is negligible. Therefore, this study shows that the notion of a "compromise" does not appeal to activists and grassroots movements, in particular those who are fundamentally opposed to a business proposition or policy decision.

The study challenges the notion that corporations are a principal target of grassroots activism and thus the assumption in PR literature that activists exist in opposition to organisations. The data indicate that in order to influence/encourage lasting change, activists consider it more effective to target the key stakeholders on

which corporations depend for their long-term prosperity, such as shareholders and legislative decision makers (see Chapter 7). Organisations themselves solely represent a campaign target, based on their visibility within the community. However, activists' focus and commitment reaches beyond challenging individual corporations and single issues. Grassroots activists do not challenge individual organisations' license to operate, but instead their legacy. At its core, grassroots activism is about social and environmental justice, equal access to opportunities and most importantly the right—even the obligation—of citizens to make informed decisions and participate in democratic processes. Activists' role in society is fundamentally different to that of corporations: rather than shape the status quo for personal or organisational benefits, activists challenge the existing state of affairs to encourage informed, critical decision making by citizens. In effect, the role of grassroots activism is to actively shape society (see figure 9.2), which is explained in detail in the following section).

Recognition of activists' broader focus and their fundamental role in an engaged society clarifies why grassroots activists move between different issues and campaigns, driven by perceived urgency and personal interests. What at first may appear to be a single interest group, like the WA ANM, may on closer inspection represent only one of many campaign foci within a web of interconnected and affiliated issues. Consequently, grassroots activists do not challenge individual organisations' license to operate, but the legacy they leave. Their ultimate focus is on society and the fostering of an engaged, alert and participatory community.

However, findings indicate that unlike corporations and their PR departments, grassroots activists like the WA AMN are not driven by the aspiration to manufacture consent or the need to coerce decision makers into supporting their cause. Instead, they are motivated by a desire to foster community-wide informed involvement and engagement in democratic decision making. I argue that being aware of its non-permanent nature, activists set out to challenge and influence the habitus in a given societal context, hence challenge what is perceived as acceptable and what is not. From this perspective, it is secondary, even irrelevant, whether individual "actions" are successful; if activists meet specific communication goals, or not. I agree with Bourdieu that activists' role in society is significant based on their mere existence. By challenging the status quo, questioning assumptions, contesting conventions and opposing engrained belief systems, activists encourage the development of informed and engaged citizens, who are motivated to be active

participants in the democratic process. As such, activists' role in society is much broader than the highlighting of a simple, temporary or long-term, issue.

From this perspective, activists may be seen as challengers of the symbolic processes which involve what Bourdieu (1991) refers to as symbolic violence (Chapter 4, page 108). This is because they contest the acceptance of the existing social order. As explained in Chapter 4, symbolic violence is the exercising of symbolic power, such as then PR is used to manipulate societal meanings. By definition, symbolic power is not physical, however, it is exceptionally powerful as it is exercised with the implicit support of its subjects, i.e. even those people who are disadvantaged by it. Furthermore, in contrast to Gramsci's (1971) notion of hegemony, symbolic violence is not explicit and overt, but based on misrecognition. Marked by the privatisation of government services, market deregulation and an increased role of the private sector, neoliberal societies like those of Australia are a typical example of modern symbolic violence in action. From Bourdieu's perspective, the inevitability of neoliberalism is evidenced in its naturalisation in the eyes of many. Findings suggest that activists seek to challenge symbolic violence by revealing the underlying power relations that enable actors, such as the industry, to impose preferred meanings as legitimate. Corporate public relations activities perform a central role in these legitimisation processes. Activists' role in society can thus be interpreted as raising awareness of symbolic violence amongst those who have traditionally accepted and complied with their personal suppression by other, more powerful elements of society. The aim is not to convince the community of their subjugation, but to ask questions, challenge norms and encourage others to do the same. By challenging neoliberal values and their representation in society, activists effectively hold a mirror up to society by encouraging citizens to re-assess their priorities and individual role in society. I argue that activists' function is particularly crucial within the Australian context, which is characterised by limited critical voices, due to its high concentration of media ownership (page 44) and two-party dominated political landscape (page 45 I concur with Bourdieu in arguing that the presence of critical counter-voices and powers is a fundamental element of any genuine democracy. Therefore, within such a context of limited political debate and critical counter voices, activists are central to the existence of an engaged, modern society.

How do activists empower citizens?

Based on the findings in this study, I argue that activism is not about reaching a compromise or the manufacturing of consent. Instead, it seeks to encourage community members to question assumptions, critically analyse information that is presented by corporations, politicians and the media as unquestionable facts, become actively involved in democratic processes, and ultimately challenge the status quo. In his work, Pierre Bourdieu emphasised this vital role activists play in society, by ensuring the voices of less powerful elements in society are heard (Chapter 4). Equally, the data suggests that activists are not the originators, but the facilitators of (social) change, by confronting belief systems and, most importantly, by providing individuals with the platforms to convene with likeminded people and the tools to have their voice heard. Activists therefore are not driven by an opportunity to better themselves or the organisation they may be associated with, but by a desire to provide the community with the means to become a collective of engaged citizens. They do this via three major means.

Firstly, they raise awareness of an issue. Via traditional community engagement tools, such as street theatre, with the use of humour and satire, confronting slogans and/or public (media) stunts, activists challenge conventions and engrained belief systems. They thereby challenge voluntary and involuntary audiences to re-assess their own values and priorities, as well as to critically examine the world around them, by questioning information, priorities and ultimately the validity of the status quo.

Secondly, they educate citizens. In drawing on their cultural capital (subject specific knowledge), activists provide community members with additional, often unconventional and less accessible information that provides an alternative to mainstream government and media resources. They do this by providing convenient access to self-compiled research publications and reports, media releases, flyers, brochures, websites and, more recently, via links on social media to alternative studies, media outlets and further resources. They thereby encourage individuals to gain insight into different perspectives, build their personal level of knowledge, and critically examine—and thus possibly challenge—their prior knowledge. In doing so, activists develop and nurture the total cultural capital of the activist (and support) community.

Thirdly, activists encourage and facilitate action by providing the platforms for individual community members to become engaged, actively involved and,

ultimately, organised. Community events, protest marches and gatherings, planning meetings and more recently social media groups are easily accessible forums to meet people with similar agendas and interests. From here, new alliances and action groups may be formed. These platforms are also crucial in providing individuals with emotional support. Finally, they physically and visually grow the social capital of a given group or movement, hence its profile and ultimately power to influence. The power to influence lies in the shared interest in an issue. Only when the wider community comes together as a collective and takes control of their future, are they able to organise for social change.

Grassroots activist groups are therefore deeply embedded at the core of a democratic society. At first sight, they may appear small and insignificant. They may pursue a particular campaign or issue for many years without any apparent success or progress. Equally, issues and affiliated groups or movements may remain dormant for a period of time, as they lack recognition, perceived urgency from and relevance to the wider community. However, with endorsement from community members, activists' ideas and actions may cause a ripple effect that influences the whole of society. This process is visually represented in Illustration 9.1.



Illustration 9.1: The Impact of activism on society

It is important to note that whilst the focus of this diagram is on people and culture, society itself has an impact on and is influenced by governments and corporations. The illustration does not suggest that governments and corporations operate outside society. However, the focus of the model is on people, culture and society - most importantly on activists' position within society. For example, in Western Australia the mining sector actively influences and seeks to shape societal values and priorities, as well as government policies and initiatives, through what Bourdieu referred to as symbolic violence, i.e. the imposition of industry supportive perceptions and values onto the West Australian community. However, a shift in public sentiment towards environmental values and an increased emphasis on sustainability may influence the relevant authorities to review current policies, increase environmental restrictions and possibly even corporate taxation requirements. These factors will in turn have an impact on corporations, their economic and social capital and ultimately power, thus their ability to enforce their perspectives and social standing as fair and just.

Findings suggest that such a shift in community support for a particular issue is often caused by a change of circumstances or a "trigger event", i.e. an incident of major social significance that compels individuals to re-assess their values, belief systems and priorities. One such example in this case study was the 2011 tsunami and consequent nuclear meltdown in Fukushima, Japan. By the end of the data collection this incident had only caused minor 'ripples' across Australian society, with the pro-nuclear lobby attracting more media attention than the anti-nuclear movement. However, the increased community concern about nuclear radiation was perceived as sufficient enough by both major Federal parties to publicly rule out the introduction of nuclear power.

To conclude, community endorsement and recognition are crucial to the success of any activist campaign or issue. Activists provide community members with the tools and platforms to become engaged and challenge the status quo. In doing so, they ultimately shape society. They do this firstly by challenging societal norms and perceptions, secondly by sharing and distributing issue specific knowledge and expertise, and finally by providing easily accessible forums through which individuals can engage with similarly interested community members and become organised. Activists rely on community recognition and endorsement of their issues to enable lasting community change.

Implications for public relations scholarship

The prevailing corporate-centric, industry-serving, functionalist paradigm in PR scholarship can be interpreted as institutionalised symbolic violence enforced on behalf of power-holders (see pages 110 and 286). Historically, PR scholars, particularly those from the dominant, US schools of thought, have focused on enabling PR practitioners to become more effective in reaching corporate goals without taking account of how public relations impacts on society. This limited perspective is particularly apparent within PR scholarship on activism, where the focus has been either on undermining activists' efforts and constraining their impact on corporations' bottom line, or otherwise largely limited to those activist groups whose structures and management processes resemble those of corporations, as argued on page 69. This limited perspective undermines the occupation's standing in society and its potential recognition as a respected profession. However, more importantly, it undermines scholars' efforts to establish public relations as a critical discipline in its own right. The increased visibility and prominence of critical scholars, such as Christine Daymon, Kristin Demetrious, Lee Edwards, Jacqui L'Etang, Kevin Meloney, Judy Motion, Ian Somerville and Kay Weaver, promises to gradually broaden the public relations research agenda.

The choice of the ethnographic research methodology has indirectly led to highlighting a number of limitations within the existing scholarly agenda in public relations, in particular in relation to the study of activist communication. PR scholarship is characterised by over-simplified and broadly generalised assumptions about the nature of public relations, as well as activism, which fail to take into account how cultural and societal contexts are often manipulated through the practice of public relations. This study has highlighted that activism is more complex and diverse than conventionally theorised. I hope that it will motivate other public relations researchers to leave the conventional path behind, as well as existing assumptions and perspectives, and immerse themselves in the world of activism to provide alternative perspectives and interpretations of activists' role in society.

This study challenges existing conventions in activism PR scholarship, which has been characterised by conceptual papers and studies conducted through the corporate lens, because the study provides an ethnographic illustration of grassroots activism. Rather than relying on external observations, I immersed myself in the world of anti-nuclear activism and encouraged individuals to share their understanding of activists' role within society. The resulting data provides the

public relations community with genuine, direct and often very personal insights from an insider's perspective into activist communication.

This study highlights the crucial notion of social and symbolic capital. However, within the practice of managed communications these concepts have to date been largely ignored, despite the recognition that power performs a central role in public relations. This is something public relations scholars need to explore further, in other contexts beyond grassroots activism.

Limitations

As an exploratory, single case study, this project has a number of limitations. Firstly, it provides insight into only one activist group, during a given period of time, within one cultural and economic context. As I have emphasised throughout this thesis, social movements like the WA ANM are characterised by constant change. This study therefore provides a snapshot of what I as a researcher observed and experienced during the time of data collection. I acknowledge that many conversations and examples of communication would have taken place without my presence. However, it is my actual presence and participation as a researcher that have enabled me to gain first-hand insights into grassroots activism from the activist point of view.

Secondly, throughout this study, I have provided participants with the opportunity to share their thoughts in their own words. However, the findings and in particular my conclusions rely on my personal ability as a researcher, as well as my own identity and cultural background (intersubjectivity). These and further limitations have been acknowledged and are discussed in detail in Chapter 5. However, despite its limitations, this study is unique within a public relations activism context, as it provides first-hand, in-depth insight into activist communication from the activist's point of view, over a period of two and a half years.

The cultural and economic contexts in which this study took place are also unique. As a first world nation, Australia differentiates itself from many other parts of the world in which activism is practised. Australia—particularly Western Australia—experienced a more favourable economic climate than the rest of the (developed) world during the data collection for this study. The generalisability of my findings is thus limited. However, many characteristics of my research setting are shared by

other nations. By drawing on both the data and social movement literature, I have been able to offer insights from the activist perspective, as well as theoretical propositions regarding the societal role of activism. While (single) case study findings must be treated with caution, these propositions may have transferability to similar social context. Equally, my findings are not limited to the role of activists positioned on the far left of the political spectrum, such as the WA ANM. Instead, my argument relating to activists' role in society as challengers, educators and contributors to informed decision making is transferable to groups representing all kinds of perspectives and political inclinations. Further case study research in other cultural and social contexts is necessary to either confirm or reject the transferability of my conclusions and to build the knowledge and understanding of activist communication.

Further research

This study set out to provide new insights that would contribute to the public relations' body of knowledge, more specifically to activist public relations. However, based on the study findings, I question if activist communication should be positioned within public relations scholarship, due to the inherent resource and skills discrepancies between corporate public relations departments and volunteer-reliant activist groups. Public relations scholarship has traditionally not only ignored the public in public relations (Karlberg, 1996; Leitch & Neilson, 1997), it has also provided very limited understanding of and insight into communication practices beyond a corporate focus. This narrow focus has undermined the development of public relations as a critical research discipline in its own right. This is particularly relevant within the context of activist communication. Social scientists, such as Bourdieu and Accardo (1999) and Tedlock (2005), have embraced ethnography from a humanistic perspective, grounded in a commitment to serve the communities in which their research is carried out, as opposed to furthering the interests of the already powerful entities in society. Whilst I question that activists are actually public relations practitioners in their own right, as suggested by some critical scholars, I believe useful insights can nevertheless be gleaned from this study that may aid public relations in its development as a scholarly discipline with a critical focus that takes account of its social responsibilities. The study of communication from an activist lens offers an alternative view of how governments and corporations, as well

as their (public relations) actions are understood, positioned and valued within the wider community.

To date, activism research in public relations has predominantly focused on large, established, international NGOs. Further research is required into social movements and smaller community groups in order to build an understanding of how grassroots activists' communication activities (may) differ from those of corporate public relations departments, thereby building on the findings from this study and its propositions in regards to grassroots activists' role in society.

Study findings have illustrated the fluid nature of the WA ANM as a result of activist foci as well as in response to political and environmental changes. Hence, a longitudinal study of the WA anti-nuclear movement, which builds on this particular study, would be insightful in tracking the movement, its changes and (communication) challenges over time, as the WA context changes. The aim of this study has been to provide in depth insight into one particular social movement with an established history. The ethnographic methodology suited this focus, however, my attempts to capture the shifting composition of the network (see Appendix 10.1-10.4) are primarily useful for illustration purposes. A detailed network analysis, as detailed by Diani (2002), would enable the mapping of the WA ANM and its various nodes, as well as links with multiple other movements and activist groups. Furthermore, considering the prominent role of key activists, both in the WA ANM and in this study, a phenomenological study of individual activists (as opposed to the group as a whole) would provide valuable insights into the activist identity and underlying motivational factors that encourage individuals to become (and maintain) active involvement in one or multiple movements.

In his detailed comparative analysis of anti-nuclear movements in three municipalities in the Boston (United States) area, Miller (2000) demonstrates the implications of scale, place and environmental factors in social movement mobilisation. Building on his recognition of the impact geography has on movements' relevance and success, as well as the need for appropriate, place-sensitive strategies, further comparative research is required in order to understand anti-nuclear activism. This study has exclusively focused on the anti-nuclear movement in Western Australia. Comparative studies in other parts of Australia, as well as of anti-nuclear movements in other countries and cultural contexts, would facilitate a greater understanding of the uniqueness of the WA context, as well as

enhance scholars' insights into the different facets, styles of and approaches to grassroots activism.

Finally, this study exclusively focuses on the perspective of WA ANM activists. Although, individuals may be motivated by and committed to multiple causes, the WA ANM is essentially a single issue group. The proposed definition of activists on page 280 refers to "facilitating civic *engagement* in the democratic process". However, based on the data collected as part of this study, I cannot claim an actual *impact* on policy decisions. The question arises how effective single issue activists can be in influencing public policy and legislative change, as any political party standing for government has to develop policies and produce a manifesto across a whole range of issues, many of which produce conflicting priorities (Grant, 2000; Weissberg, 2005). To some extent, then, single issue groups may work to undermine, or pose a threat to democratic functioning. This alternative view, as well as the actual impact on policy, are worth further investigation.

10. Appendix

10.1-4 Network charts, mapping the development of the WA ANM over time.

Note: these maps are based on WA ANM activists' actual names and organisational affiliations, as the use of pseudonyms would enable the re-identification of in-text quotes and references throughout this thesis.

10.1 WA ANM: key players and affiliations (July 2009)

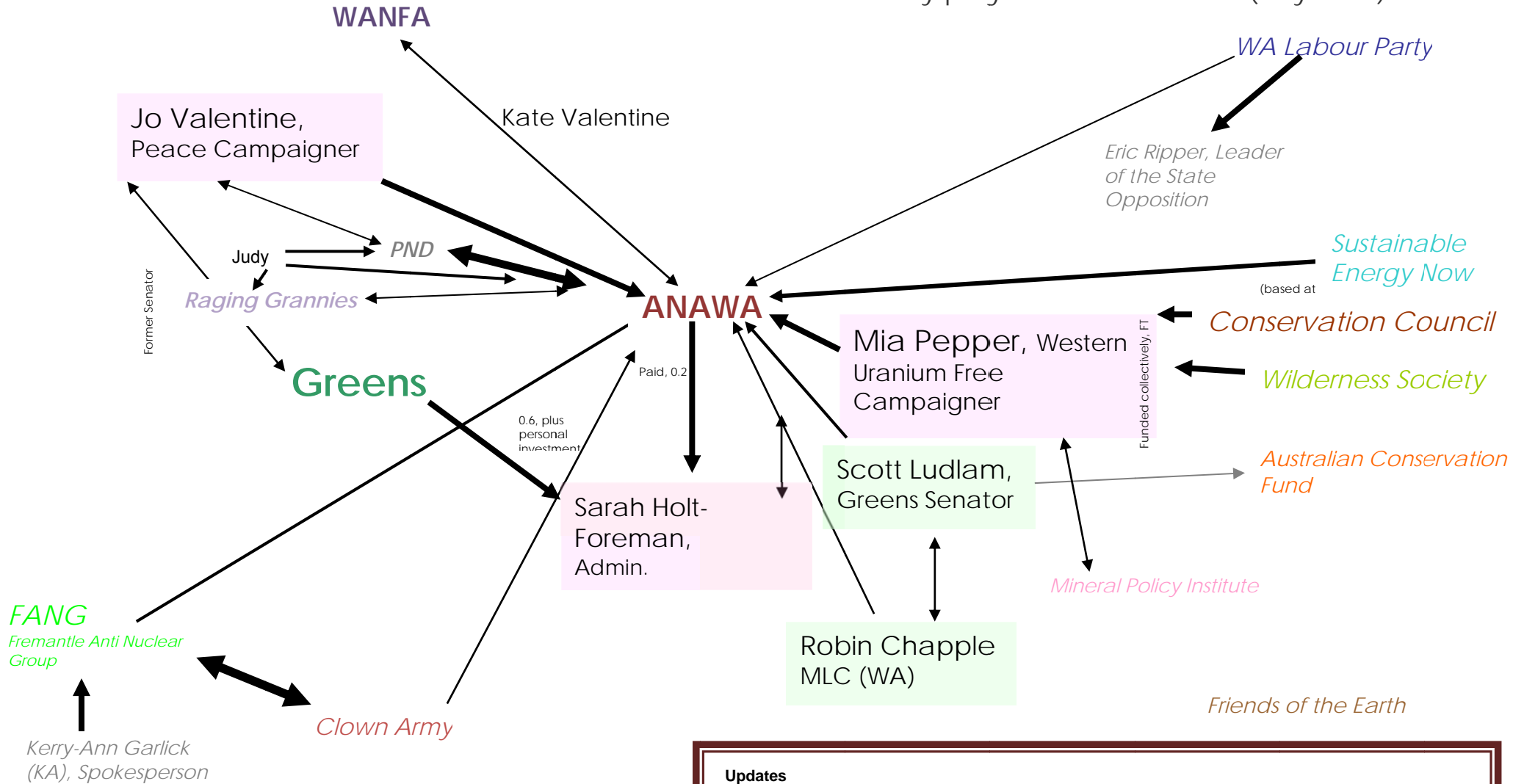
10.2 WA ANM: key players and affiliations (July 2010)

10.3 WA ANM: key players and affiliations (December 2010)

10.4 WA ANM: key players and affiliations (June 2011)

10.5 Examples of personal memo reflections and observations

10.2 - WA ANM: Key players and affiliations (July 2010)

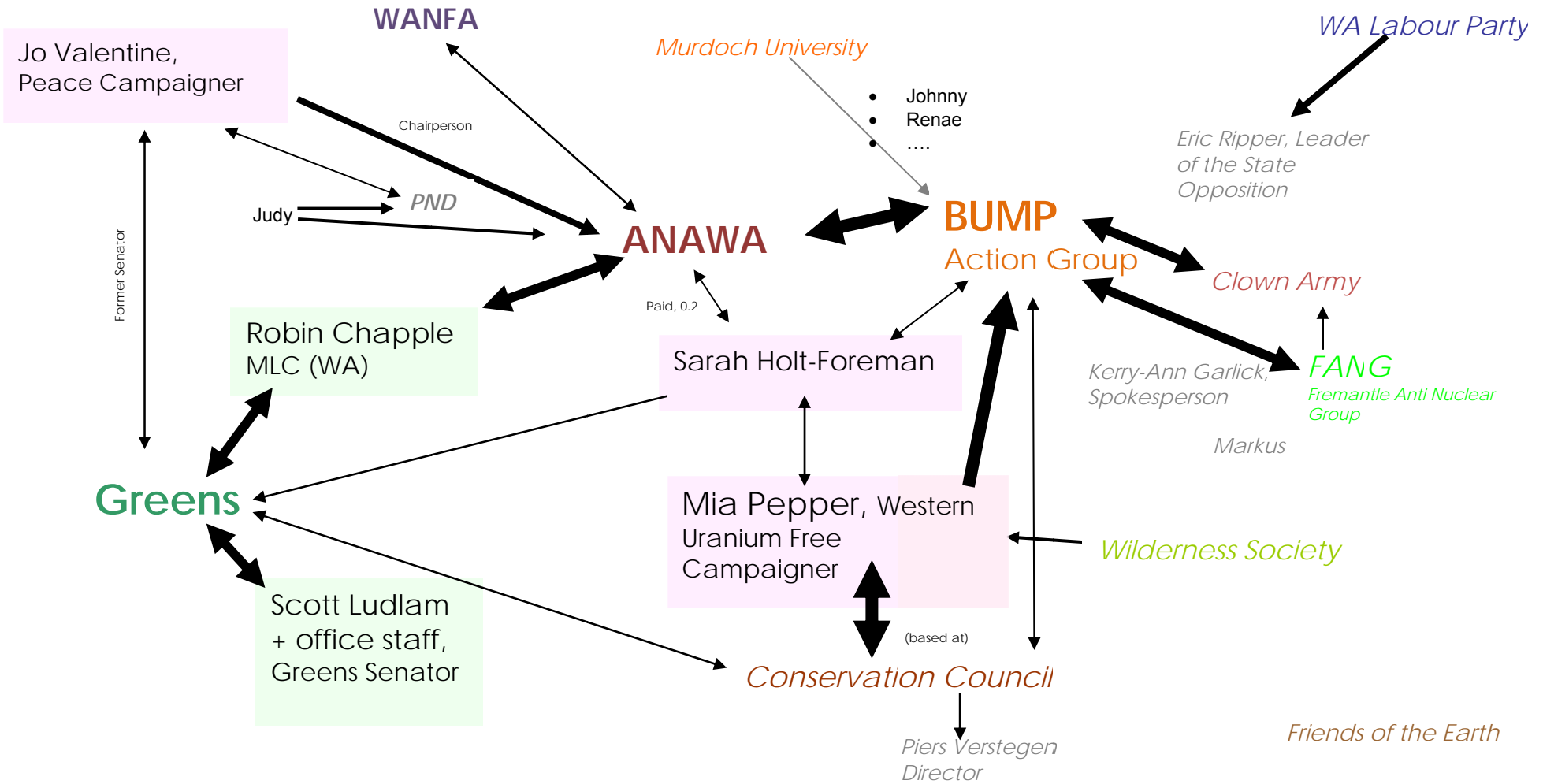


Arrow from organisation to individual: funding relationship, paid position
 Arrow from individual to organisation: supporter
 Two way arrow: mutually supporting relationship
 Thickness of the arrow: intensity of relationship
 Proximity represents approximate proximity of key players

Updates

- As of 2010 ANAWA ran out of funding and was reduced to Sarah Holt-Foreman in a 0.2 capacity (secretariat/ admin).
- Kate Valentine continued in a voluntary capacity until mid-year (Kalgoorlie conference focus), but has since got engaged and gone travelling in Africa.
- I am not sure if Hillary is still involved with the movement in any shape or form. She hasn't been seen since the funding for her position ran out.
- Nat Lowrey, the Conservation Council's Uranium Free Campaigner, has gone overseas and around Easter been replaced by Mia Pepper
- Robin Chapple has continued his own activities against uranium mining, but has been largely pre-occupied with the introduction of euthanasia legislation
- FANG has been very quiet, but KA was due to return and plans another big walk
- Jo Vallentine appeared to be been very quiet, travelling to Broome and being away during recent actions
- Other previously featured groups and individuals have dropped off due to their limited profile within the WA ANM context

10.3 - WA ANM: Key players and affiliations (December 2010)

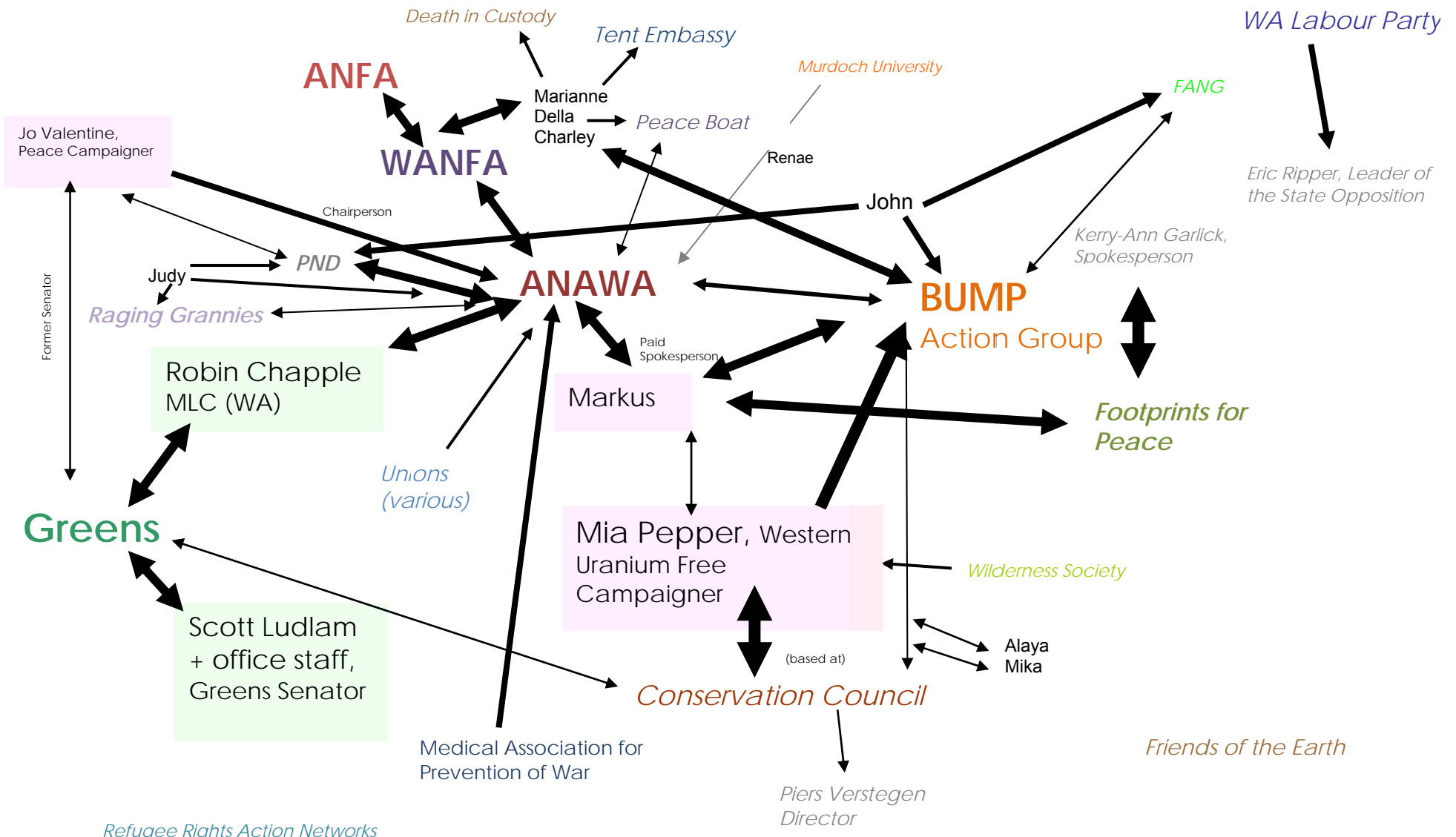


Arrow from organisation to individual: funding relationship, paid position
 Arrow from individual to organisation: supporter
 Two way arrow: mutually supporting relationship
 Thickness of the arrow: intensity of relationship
 Proximity represents approximate proximity of key players

Updates

- Observations based on activity during 2010 Fremantle Carnival Parade
- Greens are visually represented as further distanced due to focus on own activities (e.g. marriage equality) instead of public support for WA ANM
- Kate Vallentine continued travelling and was no longer actively involved
- WANFA is mentioned but did not play a prominent role
- Lack of visibility of the Raging Grannies
- Sarah left position with Greens

10.4 - WA ANM: Key players and affiliations (June 2011)



Arrow from organisation to individual: funding relationship, paid position
 Arrow from individual to organisation: supporter
 Two way arrow: mutually supporting relationship
 Thickness of the arrow: intensity of relationship
 Proximity represents approximate proximity of key players

Updates

- Increased insight gained into aspects of the WA ANM as participant observation intensified
- Public actions and involvement increased in the lead up to the next State elections
- Sarah has stopped her involvement, but other people became increasingly visible and engaged
- WANFA performed a more prominent role
- I became aware of more individuals, as result of my exposure during participant observation
- Raging Grannies re-emerged in time for conference protests
- The WWF ceased commenting on nuclear / uranium issues
- Despite numerous efforts. the Clown Army remained inactive

10.5 Sample memos

7 May 2009 – notes

Oh, what am I doing! I've just got back from this month's PRIA (Public Relations Institute of Australia) State Council meeting where I found out that [a fellow Councillor] is representing [an organisation one of the activist groups under observation is opposed to].

I respect [my fellow Councillor] and her work...she is an expert when it comes to community consultation and rightly recognises that comms is one crucial aspect that's been neglected in this process...Does it matter if my PR peers perceive certain activists and their activities as unreasonable? To make things worse, she pointed out that the man running [the organisation] is a personal friend. This is developing into a true conflict of interest and puts a question mark over my future involvement with the industry body.

What am I doing? Am I fooling myself here? PR is representing big industry...justifying their existence...Can I really look at this from the activist perspective and maintain my integrity – both with activists and the industry?

Will I be able to remain neutral? Who in PR (academia and practice) cares about activists? (Apart from desperately trying to keep them quiet.) I have met so many inspirational, enthusiastic and genuine people ...they can't all be simply dismissed as "unreasonable". So far my study participants have been very welcoming, insightful and committed to creating a better world. However, will there be any interest in my study? Will I be able to make a contribution to the body of knowledge in PR? And most importantly, will I be able to conduct my research in a professional way, without tainting by my industry background and relationships?

Action

- Discuss concerns with [supervisors]
- Research and read up on relevant literature, discussing (potential) conflict of interest, neutrality and integrity

3 May 2011 – notes on tonight's BUMP

meeting

Johno showcased a new flyer, designed for grandparent/ parent investors, highlighting “what a bad investment uranium is”: No future, no investment stability, no existing projects, etc. This is to be distributed (letterbox drop) around Julie Bishop's [Federal MP] office and at [Breakfast at] Barnett's.

I can't recall this flyer being discussed previously. It must have been a personal initiative by Johno – and indeed Judy, who is closely working with based on their involvement in PND. I hope someone will be able to design a more visually attractive flyer based on the original draft, instead of keeping it as a page of text, to ensure they get their key messages across (cost involved in uranium mining, need for government subsidies, emphasis on ethical implications, etc.)

Alice talked about (the rise in) ethical investors. Apparently some WA ANM affiliates (unofficially) buy shares in mining or even weapon manufacturing companies to get access to AGM. These, and other likeminded investors provide activists with proxy votes. What an interesting conversation! This explains how key activists gain access to the AGMs, whilst others demonstrate outside. This also highlights how naïve I have been – I should have clicked on to this this before! This is activists' opportunity to highlight issues in front of an ROI fixed audience.

- **Investigate rise of investor/shareholder activism.**

[due to confidentiality issues the next section has been omitted]

Before the meeting I had a chat with Rachel regarding the article we are due to write for the Conservation Council magazine. Rachel emphasised the importance of ‘fun’ to attract new bumpers (as we assume that this is the aim of this article is ...). Fun and excitement is the key to draw people in. Life is already miserable enough; people need something ‘light’, e.g. a funny online campaign/ video to draw them in. There are already enough pressures and worries in daily life....

- **‘Fun’ and a need for ‘positive action’ is developing into a major theme. Look further into this (literature) and pursue in remaining interviews**

Alice is amazingly patient and calm. It doesn't matter how unrealistic an idea is, or if an old idea is being pitched as a new lightbulb moment, she patiently listens and gives everyone lots of space. I truly admire her for this. I can personally learn a lot about listening skills in these meetings!

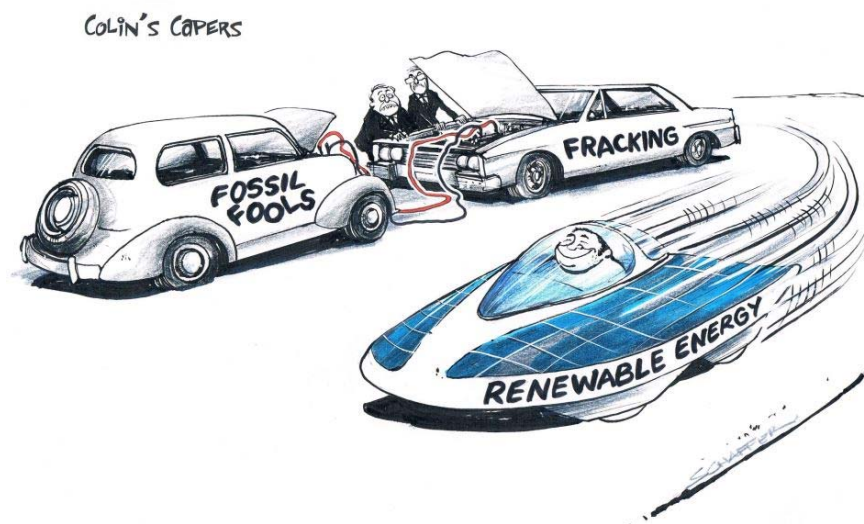
[further observations have been edited out for confidentiality reasons]

18 February 2012– multi issues at breakfast at Barnett's

Breakfast at Barnett's has obviously gained more momentum. With only a few weeks to go until the State election, there is now a Facebook page that is dedicated to the weekly roadside demonstration: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Breakfast-at-Barnetts>. This is major progress!

Most interestingly, though, the Breakfast's focus appears to have truly moved beyond uranium mining (although the profile photo displays originates from one of the earlier stop uranium mining protests I attended). Initially the WA ANM struggled to get other groups involved, but it looks like the Conservation Council representatives have mobilised various issues to be represented under the Breakfast label.

The timeline now even has funky cartoons, such as the one below, illustrating the cross-cross issue nature of the initiative:



Issues the movement has committed itself to represent "to passing motorists" include renewable energy, safe cycling networks, cash for containers, public transport, fracking-free

WA, no gas hub in the Kimberley, preserving urban trees, GMO-free WA and of course “leaving uranium safely in the ground” (amongst many others).

This is fascinating. Some of these issues are covered by the Conservation Council. However, most are not represented by a coherent group. Rather, it appears, the long list of causes related to issues that are close to individual activists’ hearts. Some of these have emerged recently (or at least since I ceased attending BUMP planning meetings) – but most I’m familiar with as discussions frequently strayed beyond the uranium focus during my observation period. This further confirms activists’ multi-issue focus and strengthens my argument that the social justice advocate role sits at the core of the activist identity.

13 November 2012~ notes on identity / social justice

Like Bourdieu, WA ANM activists refuse to conform to norms and expectations. Many interviewees have commented on the fact that their immediate family had assumed their activist activities had merely been a phase in their lives, encouraging them to meet middle class Australian expectations, such as to settle down, get a permanent job buy a house and start a family. However, driven by their passion for social justice and need to address inequalities in society, WA ANM grassroots activists don't feel the need to conform to these norms and expectations.

- **Source relevant reference to Bourdieu, to link findings back to Bourdieu Chapter / characteristics**

However, their passion for social justice and perceived need to address inequalities in societies appears to influence their life decisions / provide direction for life choices. As such societal expectations take a back step.

Doesn't this signify who activists really are? Driven by their internalised beliefs?

Activism appears to be more than a conscious decision. Instead it's a passion that provides direction and gives meaning to their personal lives and the way they see and make sense of society. As such meeting expectations is not a priority.

Many WA ANM activists have taken on work specifically to fund their activist lifestyles. Those lucky enough to secure one of the rare paid activist opportunities with established NGOs or political parties (usually the Greens party) are usually paid at minimal rates, can expect part time arrangements and are – without exception – only employed on a contractual basis. Funding for activist positions usually relies on fundraising and grants and is therefore restricted to a relatively short timeframe.

I reckon it would be impossible to separate activist activities from other parts of individuals' identity. Activism is not a hobby or a 9-5 job, it's a passion, a way of seeing the world and making sense of society. In fact, it is a way of making sense of their own lives. Social justice

activism has become a way of defining and expressing themselves. Based on the campaign t-shirts they wear, stickers on their cars, bikes or bags and the initiatives they publicly associate themselves with via social media, activists construct and define their own identity.

- **Further explore notion of activist identity based on first-hand accounts and observations.**
- **Explore “social justice advocate” label – could this be an overarching/ all embracing role?**

For WA ANM activists this is usually a very personal, individualistic journey. Although there are support mechanisms within the group, action depends on individuals' initiative. This may explain why during the data collection phase a number of activists emerged, became highly visible and then disappeared again – or wandered off to become involved with other campaigns.

- **Explore data based on individualism vs. collectivism / group commitment priorities**

Doesn't this deeply engrained passion for social justice explains the shift from a single focus on anti-nuclear issues to a multi-issue focus. Doesn't this explain the constant change in the makeup of the WA ANM I have observed? With the exception of a core group, in particular those in paid positions, individuals have been drifting in, they attended the weekly planning meetings, got involved in initiatives, and then drifted off again. Does this mean that they were had stopped supporting the WA ANM? I don't reckon so. Especially towards the end of the data collection a number of activists returned for actions, such as the uranium mining conference demonstrations.

Doesn't this mean that the deeply engrained passion for social justice drives grassroots activists, as opposed to the alliance to a specific group? I reckon this is one of the key differentiators between activists who may be drawn to the bigger, well branded NGOs such as the WWF or Greenpeace and grassroots activists, who are essentially loyal to the cause – not the organisation or group itself. This explains the constantly changing nature, design and make up of the WA ANM. Hence WA ANM activists are no longer restricted to anti-nuclear activities. Their commitment reaches beyond

- **Explore difference between NGOs and grassroots organisations further – do I need to define this?**

- **Revisit (social movement) literature and explore references to organisational/cause alliance**

Activism becomes more than a label or descriptor. Activism is an outlet, a way of seeing the world and expressing/vocalising your identity. Hence, it doesn't matter what the actual label is – activists, social justice advocate or even treehugger – “**activism is an attitude to life**”, a way of seeing society and understanding ‘your’ role within it.

20th Dec 2012~ notes on Activists as guardians

Below is a copy of a statement that went up on the Uraniumfree WA Facebook page today, further re-enforcing the activist identity as “guardians”, based on a news item on thewest.com.au. This confirms – and actually clarifies – some of my thoughts for the activist identity chapter.

By highlighting how the government – and in particular the State’s Environmental Protection Agency – fail the community / ignore long term consideration for the State and its citizens living standards through a focus on short term business benefits/industry concerns, the WA ANM (via the Uraniumfree WA identity) positions itself as guardian /custodian of the land. This is a classical framing of a “us vs. them situation” – us, as in the WA ANM and other activists on the side of citizens vs. “them” the government, which stands firmly on the side of industry.

So, the WA ANM argument is that as the government fails to protect nature and community interests, activists simply have to step up. Interesting.



It's great to see the Facebook page become a little more active again.

Most importantly, the guardian/ custodian label compliments my existing thoughts (and coding) on WANFA's / Indigenous activists' positioning. Does the "guardian role" (or identity) explain the close relationship with indigenous groups, i.e. highlight a similar worldview and sense of responsibility?

- **Is this a role/ function of activists? Or rather, is the custodian/guardian a crucial role of their identity.**

Action

Re-examine existing identity coding and consolidate related nodes under the guardian/ custodian label.

10.6 Formative study interview guide

In line with the chosen exploratory, interpretive approach, a number of key *themes* have been identified, which will be further investigated as part of the semi-structured interviews during this stage of the pilot study.

Introduction

- Brief group background (history, issue, number of supporters (core group + general supporters/volunteers/members/subscribers)?)
- Personal/individual motivation, involvement and role

Communication channels (media, word of mouth, events, new media, etc)

- How do activists ensure their voice is being heard?
- How do they raise the profile of an issue?
- There appears to be a rise in media coverage of activism on a local and global level. As how important do activists perceive traditional **media**?

New Media (identified in PR literature as a potential “power equaliser”, widely embraced by activist groups)

- What role do *new media* play in activist’s communication efforts?
- Although new media are a new, low cost communication channel, do activists actually perceive that they help them in making their voice heard and adding their issue/perspective to the public agenda?

Key stakeholders

- Who do activists perceive as their key stakeholders?
- How important is **community**/volunteer/supporter involvement?
- Does **lobbying** play a central role in their activities?
- How do activists work with **other** related (or opposed) **activist** organisations? (literature has identified increased opportunities for activist groups to form coalitions via the Internet – is this actually happening? – on and offline?)

Activists’ role in democratic decision making

- A number of scholars have identified activists as important key players within a democratic society. Do activists believe they play an important role in ensuring democratic decision making and upholding the notion of a public sphere?

Motivation (literature has widely failed to look at activists’ motivation – why do they do what they do?)

- What do they identify as the ‘key success/achievement’ in their work to date?
- What are the major challenges lying ahead?

10.7 BUMP interview guide

In line with the chosen exploratory, interpretive approach, a number of key *themes* have been identified, which will be further investigated as part of the semi-structured interviews

WA Anti Nuclear Movement

In your own words, how would you describe the WA anti nuclear movement & its role?

What is the significance of the WA context within the fight against uranium mining? (*WA has previously been identified as “the **frontline**” in the fight against uranium mining in Australia*)

Has the movement changed over past year, five years, decades?

What do you perceive as the current key challenges for the movement?

From challenges to wins and success: How do you define ‘success’? What would you identify as a ‘win’?/ is this a fight to be won permanently?
Frontline in fight against uranium mining?

Any examples of (recent) successes?

Motivation & Identity

A number of scholars have identified activists as important key players within a democratic society. Do anti nuclear activists believe they play an important role in ensuring democratic decision making and upholding the notion of a public sphere?

Would you describe yourself as an activist?

If no, what would be a more appropriate label that you could identify with?

If yes, what does it mean to you to “BE” an activist?

How did you get involved in the anti nuclear movement?

Why did you get involved/ what motivated you to become active?

Role in democratic decision making processes/ active citizen/ social justice – all themes that came out previously

What would you identify as the movements key successes/achievement to date?

Are you involvement in any other causes/movements?

How do you split your time between causes and other commitments?

How important is involvement in your involvement in the anti nuclear movement to your identity? (*how does your work define who you are and what you stand for?*)

How to you maintain motivation? *How important is “feeling good”, enjoyment?—sustainability vs burn out*

Notion of family

Do your friends/family support you in your role as activist?

Who are your friends? Are they part of this network?

Then ask about sense of community:

How important is a sense of community and support for you as part of your involvement in the anti nuclear movement? (*the notion of ‘family’ has previously come out strongly*)

Power – unequal distribution of

Put yourself into the shoes of the companies or the government – how do you think they see you & your activities? (How would I view us? What would I be thinking – effective or not?)

How would you describe your interaction with government, corporations?

Do **you** think you are effective as a movement- and why/why not

In your opinion, what are the key advantages you have over them?

*Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic capital: moving beyond economic means, i.e. **cultural** (knowledge/expertise) & **social** (network) – PROBE if necessary*

Where does knowledge and expertise come from?

Do activists see themselves as professional communicators?

In your opinion, what are the key advantages they have over you?

What are some of your key strategies to overcome these?

New media as power equalizer (*widely discussed in scholarly literature*)

At the moment social media such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs are very effective (just think Middle East and Northern Africa)– do you think it’s got a role here in WA? Potential for the future?

What role do *new media* play in anti nuclear activists’ communication efforts?

Although new media are a new, low cost communication channel, do you actually perceive that they help you in making your voice heard and contribute to public debate?

Thank you

Anything you'd like to add?

Is there anyone else you suggest that I should be speaking to?

Will send transcript

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