

Caring, sharing and mobilizing – information sharing practices among Swedish climate activists

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Abstract

Purpose – The study investigates how participants in the Swedish climate grassroots activist group *Rebellmammorna* engage in information sharing practices related to climate change.

Design/methodology/approach – The study uses 10 semi-structured interviews with participants in the Swedish grassroots climate activist group *Rebellmammorna*. It is informed by New Feminist Materialist Science and Technology studies and draws on Puig de la Bellacasa's concept of care. Maternal identity, rituals and storytelling are used as analytical concepts.

Findings – This study of *Rebellmammorna* shows climate activists' engagement with information as a form of care work rooted in the desire to protect their children and securing livable futures for them. Motherhood functions as a collective and strategic identity granting public authority, though creating vulnerabilities highlighting this legitimacy's fragility. Care relations foster trust and sustain activism. Self-care enables continued engagement, while mutual care maintains group cohesion with fellow participants as trusted information sources. Shared stories and rituals enacting maternal identity mediate information exchange, strengthening community bonds and supporting broader public mobilization.

Originality/value – This study highlights how emotional, relational and embodied experiences shape the interpretation, evaluation, circulation and collective production of information within the grassroots climate activism of *Rebellmammorna*. By conceptualizing motherhood and care as relational standpoints, the study advances understanding of how information practices are enacted, trusted and sustained in activist communities. It further reveals the vulnerabilities and tensions that may accompany information sharing, demonstrating how informational authority and legitimacy are both enabled and constrained by maternal identities.

Keywords Information studies, Storytelling, Information sharing, Motherhood, Care, Rituals, Climate activism, *Rebellmammorna*

Paper type Research article

Introduction

A group of women sits quietly on the ground in the city center. Their voices are turned into a gentle, steady song. In their hands they hold handwritten signs, some bearing urgent messages, most of them simply carrying the names of their children. Passers-by slow down, a few stop, letting the soft singing and the stillness of the moment draw them in. The atmosphere is calm, almost tender, yet charged with emotion.

These women have gathered here to express their deep concern about climate change and the future it threatens to bring for their children to inform people about the urgency about climate change. Calling themselves *Rebellmammorna* [1], they seek to reach the public not through confrontation, but through quiet, emotional and carefully crafted acts of presence.



Rebellmammorna is a grassroots climate movement organized around motherhood, associated with Extinction Rebellion, which was founded in 2022 and has been growing since then. The group's visibility in public spaces, as well as its presence in both news media and social media, positions it as a significant actor within Swedish climate activism. According to the group's own statements, Rebellmammorna seeks to mobilize public engagement by harnessing the power of emotion in public discourse, a strategy they see as challenging traditional societal norms (Björkholm, 2023).

Rebellmammorna employs, among others, emotionally charged narratives, visual symbolism and direct action, to make the impacts of climate change more relatable. Their approach includes public demonstrations that emphasize the urgency of climate action and aim to invoke a sense of responsibility and solidarity among the public. Despite their non-violent appearance in public, they have been presented as "security threats" in a social media post by the Swedish Prime Minister (e.g. Fagerström, 2024). Moreover, the case of a woman active in Rebellmammorna, who lost her job at the Swedish Energy Agency due to her connections to the group, got a lot of media attention (e.g. Birgander, 2024; Röstlund and Thegerström, 2024). The situation remains ongoing since the trade union Fackförbundet ST is suing the Swedish state for violating the European Convention on Human Rights and the Swedish Constitution, the Instrument of Government, which regulates fundamental rights and freedoms, including freedom of expression and opinion on behalf of that woman at the time of writing (Nordh, 2026).

Over the past decades, information about climate change has become an increasingly prominent part of everyday life. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has established a global communication platform whose reports are widely regarded as the most authoritative source of climate-related information (IPCC, 2023). These reports are used by policymakers worldwide to inform decision-making, as well as by the broader public as a source of information. However, the IPCC reports have been criticized for their complexity, not only by non-specialists but also by policymakers and practitioners (e.g. Lynn, 2018; Bruin de Bruin *et al.*, 2024).

Moreover, research consistently shows that the public often struggles to engage with climate change, largely due to its perceived spatial and temporal distance from everyday experience (e.g. Whitmarsh, 2008). This distance can reduce the perceived urgency of the climate crisis, particularly in comparison to issues that appear more immediate or personally relevant. In addition, the mechanisms and consequences of climate change are complex, making them inherently difficult to understand without forms of communication that are simplified or emotionally resonant (Robin, 2018).

From an information science perspective, these challenges highlight the limitations of viewing climate change primarily as a problem of information provision. Instead, they point to the importance of examining how information becomes meaningful, emotionally resonant and actionable within situated everyday practices. By framing climate issues in ways that resonate emotionally, Rebellmammorna seeks to foster deeper public engagement, bridging the cognitive and affective gaps that often limit responses to abstract scientific information (Kahan and Carpenter, 2017). Motivated by concerns for their childrens' futures, participants in Rebellmammorna work to translate abstract climate information into publicly accessible and meaningful forms.

While previous research (e.g. DiQuinzio, 2006) has examined motherhood as a motivational and legitimizing frame in activism, less attention has been paid to how maternal identity and practices of care shape collective information sharing, information production and meaning making. There is a lack of empirical studies that analyze grassroots climate activism as an information practice grounded in care, emotion and material mediation.

Drawing on a Feminist New Materialist perspective (e.g. Gherardi, 2025), this study investigates how climate-related information is relationally constructed and made meaningful within the grassroots activist group Rebellmammorna. Specifically, it examines how emotional, embodied and collective processes, grounded in care, shape information-sharing

practices and, consequently, influence collective climate action. The following research questions guided the investigation:

- RQ1. How do the informants describe their individual and collective engagement in Rebellmammorna in relation to climate-related information?
- RQ2. How do the informants describe their roles as mothers and caregivers?
- RQ3. How are the information sharing practices and engagement in Rebellmammorna shaped by the aspects described in RQ1 and RQ2?

The paper is structured as follows: the subsequent section describes a selective review of related research. After that the theoretical framework, including analytical tools that guided this study, is presented. Consequently, the methods are presented as well as the analysis and findings of the material. Finally, the paper ends with a concluding discussion.

Previous research

There is a substantial body of research on maternal activism and maternal politics. This section seeks to give a selective overview of motherhood and maternal activism in the field of social movement studies, the environmental humanities and gender studies and emphasizes the tensions of this topic. The final subsection discusses recent research on the affective practices of climate movements and relates them to affective information-sharing practices that situate this study within information studies.

Motherhood and maternity in activism

Previous research mostly investigated motherhood as a motivational and legitimizing factor in activism. However, collective meaning-making and information production has been less investigated in earlier research. [Rodela \(2024\)](#) points out a future-orientated dimension related to parental activism in her research and emphasized a research gap regarding parental activism.

Recent studies have identified the re-emergence of maternal appeals in politics and collective action ([Hayden, 2019](#); [Stavrianos, 2014](#)). Maternalist politics represents a relatively safe path for women who have never been political activists; for these women, motherhood is a basis to see themselves as political agents ([DiQuinzio, 2006](#); [Logsdon-Conradsen and Allred, 2010](#)). DiQuinzio concludes that maternal appeals are used strategically, using the persuasive potential to “mother” the community. She puts that in contrast to, for example, Logsdon-Conradsen and Allred’s observation that attitudes and skills that are required by mothering work are also applicable or transferable to political activism. They claim that mothering is a motivation that has yet to be explored on the topic of environmental activism ([Logsdon-Conradsen and Allred, 2010](#)). [Shrum et al. \(2023\)](#) recently reviewed the existing literature on parenthood as an environmental motivator, focusing particularly on climate change. They confirmed that parenthood is understudied as a mechanism influencing climate change behaviors. According to them, future studies should focus on examining interactions between environmental concern and parenthood, as well as other potential moderating factors, rather than looking for a single impact of parenthood on activism. Identity, characteristics of environmental threats and framing of the issue and associated movements must be considered. According to [Polletta and Jasper \(2001\)](#), activating movement participation requires alignment between a person’s identity and the movement’s collective identity. [Ekholm and Olofsson \(2017\)](#) elaborate on the correlation between parenthood and worry about the consequences of climate change. They found that parenthood is a determinant that serves to increase worry about climate change.

Tensions and critiques of maternalist politics

DiQuinzio (2006) emphasizes several concerns about maternalist politics; she states that maternalist politics risks “representing mothers, and women, as knowledgeable, interested, and entitled to political participation only as mothers and only when they are acting on behalf of children or other dependent persons.” (DiQuinzio, 2006, p. 61) On the one hand, this emphasizes an actual risk. On the other hand, it acknowledges mothers as knowledgeable, interested and entitled to political participation. Further, DiQuinzio points out that the emotional representation of maternal engagement risks undermining their credibility by representing them as irrational. As a result, the mothers are being criticized because their political and social demands are “based on emotions, not facts” and “immune to rational discussion and debate,” and therefore not worthy of serious consideration as political demands. This conclusion is supported by Lemish and Barzel (2000), who documented that Israeli activist mothers “were presented as egocentric, emotional, inconsiderate members of society, worrying only about the welfare of their own flesh and blood, and not about the common good of society.” (Lemish and Barzel, 2000, p. 155) These observations stand in contradiction to the research by Stavrianos (2014) who emphasizes respect for mothers in society, especially related to morals and care. She summarized that: “[. . .] These widely shared and deeply held beliefs about motherhood make maternal frames especially resonant and, therefore, potentially very political powerful tools for mobilization.” (Stavrianos, 2014, p. 118). DiQuinzio acknowledges the deployment of discourses and images of motherhood in grassroot activism operating on a local level. She emphasizes that this type of activism focuses on attention-gaining, media friendly activities and emphasizes the powerful symbolics of maternalist politics.

Maternalist politics also function as a tool to legitimize public activism. In the nineteenth and early twenties century, references to maternity made women able to make their voices heard in the western countries (Hayden, 2019). Nowadays, at least in western countries, this legitimization is not necessary anymore according to Hayden. However, in many countries it continues to follow this logic. Examples are the mothers of the plaza de mayo or the group of “Four Mothers”, who only had the resources of employing their maternity to manage to get their voices heard (Lemish and Barzel, 2000). These critiques highlight persistent hierarchies between emotional and rational forms of information, which are central to understanding how activist information sharing practices are evaluated and contested. At the same time, it emphasizes motherhood as a platform from which women get agency.

Climate movements as affective information sharing practices

Before the more recent affective and social turn, research on emotion/affect in information studies was dominated by cognitive approaches, where emotions played a secondary role (Krakowska, 2020). More recently, there is a growing interest among information practice research that emphasizes the role of affect in shaping how information is interpreted, shared and acted upon (e.g. Leith, 2019; Savolainen, 2015; Chen *et al.*, 2022). Embodied and material information practices extend this approach by investigating how the body and bodily expressions enact information (e.g. Prigoda and McKenzie, 2007).

However, empirical studies in information science have only begun to explore how such dynamics operate in collective activist settings, where information circulates not primarily through facts but through narratives, emotions and embodied practices. This gap is particularly evident in studies of climate activism among other fields, where emotional engagement and care for future generations play a central role.

A key aspect of the new climate movement [2] is the turn to emotions as drivers of protest. This dimension is investigated both individually through experimental and psychological studies and collectively by examining the mobilization frames adopted by the movement (Buzogány and Scherhauser, 2022). Several studies (e.g. Kleres and Wettergren, 2017; Martiskainen *et al.*, 2020) have investigated the impact of emotions on climate engagement.

Martiskainen *et al.* (2020) investigated knowledge, emotions, motivations and actions among climate strikers. They found a large variation regarding these aspects. Kleres and Wettergren (2017) identified how emotions of fear, hope, anger and guilt affect motivations and mobilizing strategies.

Westwell and Bunting (2020) studied the internal culture of the movement Extinction Rebellion, emphasizing the importance of “regenerative culture” based on care among the group. Knops (2021) found that affect can be situated within the production of climate-change-imaginaries. Other studies investigated how climate activists’ affective politics aim at giving climate change an actual place by linking the incomprehensible notion of global climate change with situated experiences (Sorensen, 2023). Sorensen argues that climate activists are trying to enact and mobilize not through numbers and data but by relating to a concrete here and now that can be seen and felt affectively. McCann (2023) claims that activism aims at making the crisis visceral, close and urgent.

Theoretical and analytical framework

In this study information is conceptualized as relational, situated and enacted through practice rather than as neutral or detached representations of reality (e.g. Cox, 2012; Lloyd, 2010). From this perspective, information is not understood as stable content that is simply transmitted between actors, but as something that is continuously produced and transformed through social, material and embodied relations.

The study is situated within feminist new materialism which decentralizes the human by showing how we are physically, ethically and materially entangled with the non-human world. Environmental information is understood as materially and bodily entangled with lived experience, foregrounding the role of sensory and affective engagement in processes of knowing (Alaimo, 2010).

Central to the analysis is the concept of care, which is used as an analytical lens to examine how climate-related information is interpreted, shared and sustained in grassroot climate activism. Drawing on the work of Puig de la Bellacasa (2017), care is understood not merely as an individual feeling or moral orientation, but as an ongoing practice through which relations are maintained and futures are made possible. According to Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) “Care joins together an affective state, a material vital doing, and an ethico-political obligation” (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 42). As such, this study analyzes the activist practices of climate activist mothers through three interconnected dimensions of care: *Affective care*, which examines the emotions and attachments that motivate activism, including fear, hope, grief, love, anxiety and responsibility toward children’s futures; *material care*, which involves practical activist labor (for example manifestations) and *ethico-political care*, which analyzes how activists frame climate action as a moral and political obligation toward future generations, society and the more-than-human world. Care is approached as a dimension of practice, shaping what counts as relevant information, how it is interpreted and how it becomes actionable in situated contexts.

Motherhood is further conceptualized as a situated standpoint (Ruddick, 1995) that shapes how climate information is encountered and evaluated. Rather than treating motherhood solely as a fixed identity or individual motivation, it is understood here as a relational position that informs what becomes meaningful, urgent and credible information. This aligns with feminist Science and Technology Studies approaches to situated knowledges, which emphasize that all information production is grounded in specific embodied and social positions (Haraway, 2013).

To further examine how information is enacted in practice, the study draws on practice-based approaches to knowing (e.g. Gherardi, 2017; Nicolini, 2011). From this perspective, information is not a static entity but is accomplished through situated activities such as storytelling, collective gatherings and embodied interaction. These practices are understood as central to how meaning is produced, negotiated and stabilized in everyday activist contexts.

Together, these perspectives frame climate information as a relational achievement rather than a fixed object. The framework allows an analysis of how care relations, situated positionalities such as motherhood and embodied practices co-produce the ways in which climate information is interpreted, shared and made meaningful within grassroot climate activism.

This study defines Rebellmammorna's activities as an information-sharing practice. Their activism is approached as a situated, relational practice wherein participants interpret, share and enact climate-related information within everyday contexts. This perspective treats their activism as an ongoing collective process distinct from formal political participation or campaigning typically associated with the term in public discourse. Nevertheless, the labels "activism" and "activist" evoke specific public perceptions. The empirical data indicate that informants are deeply concerned with their group's public image, specifically striving to distance themselves from the prevailing stereotype of the "angry activist."

Methods

The study uses a qualitative research design to explore the information sharing practices of the grassroot climate activist group Rebellmammorna. This design is appropriate since personal perceptions of the informants are analyzed in depth rather than finding generalized variables. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews which provides a balance between structure and flexibility giving the informants the possibility of elaborating their experiences on their own terms (Bryman, 2016; Wildemuth, 2016).

The recruitment of individuals who self-identified them as participants in Rebellmammorna began. In contrast to unions, there is no membership necessary to become a participant (i.e. a "Rebellmamma") and no fee to pay. Instead, the informants self-identify them as being a Rebellmamma by acknowledging the statutes of *Extinction Rebellion* and the manifest of Rebellmammorna. Informants for the interviews were recruited through snowball sampling, as several colleagues of the researcher had connections with individuals belonging to the target group. These initial informants subsequently encouraged others in the group to participate in the study. The informants all identify as female, ranged in age between 30 and 80 years and come from different places in Sweden. In the text, they are referred to as informants. All names are pseudonyms, and identifying information has been removed to ensure anonymity. Table 1 gives an overview of the interviews conducted.

Semi-structured interviews with individuals engaging in Rebellmammorna are used as a qualitative method. The interviews are part of an ongoing dissertation work. Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted, with seven held via Zoom and three through in-person meetings. The informants were asked about their experiences among the group, including how they became a Rebellmamma, specific manifestations they have participated in, and the challenges they are confronted with in the group.

Table 1. Overview of interviews conducted

Date	Pseudonym	Interview mode
2025-01-22	Ida	Zoom
2025-01-27	Pernilla	Zoom
2025-01-29	Erika	Zoom
2025-02-05	Eva	In person
2025-02-10	Hanna	In person
2025-02-12	Malin	Zoom
2025-02-19	Karin	Zoom
2025-03-04	Elsa	Zoom
2025-03-06	Johanna	In person
2025-03-13	Lisa	Zoom

The study followed the ethical guidelines of the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2024) and received formal ethical approval (approval number 2024-04014-01). All data were treated confidentially, ensuring that no identifying information was disclosed. Before the interviews, participants received written information about the study, including its purpose, procedures and their rights as participants. They were given the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification before providing their consent.

The interviews were conducted in Swedish. Audio recordings were transcribed into text using OpenAI's Whisper speech recognition model. The transcription was processed locally using the secure computational resources provided by UPPMAX at Uppsala University. The quotations used in this article were translated to English by the researcher.

A thematic analysis was carried out; this is a common qualitative analysis method that enables the researcher first to identify, then to analyze and finally report patterns (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Willig and Rogers, 2017). This process inherent a first familiarization with the data followed by initial coding which leads to generated themes and finally defining and naming these themes. The analysis initially followed an inductive approach, whereby recurring patterns, concepts and terms were identified directly from the interview data. Following this initial analysis, preliminary themes were developed by grouping related patterns and examining relationships across the dataset. The emerging themes were then considered in relation to relevant theoretical perspectives and analytical tools. The theoretical framework was selected because its concepts provided a useful lens through which to further interpret and analyze patterns identified inductively in the data. The framework was therefore not used as a predefined coding scheme, but was introduced following the initial thematic analysis to deepen the interpretation of the emerging findings. The themes and their relationships were subsequently reviewed and refined through this theoretically informed analysis.

Analysis

The findings are based on interviews with individuals who identify themselves as a Rebellmamma (see Table 1). The analysis is structured around three themes that were identified from the data: *Motherhood*, *The Role of Caring Relationships* and *Storytelling and Rituals*. The analysis reveals that these themes are highly intertwined. The following sections present how these perspectives are expressed and enacted within Rebellmammorna.

Motherhood

The results indicate that motherhood goes beyond individual motivation and appears as a central lens for interpreting, translating and sharing climate information.

For several informants (Malin, Johanna, Eva, Ida), engagement with Rebellmammorna emerged directly from the experience of being a parent. As Malin notes, "Motherhood awakens feelings that you hadn't thought about before having children." The informants reflect on the urgency having children brings. This confirms the claims by earlier research that describe motherhood as a motivational factor for activism (DiQuinzio, 2006; Logsdon-Conradsen and Allred, 2010). However, applying Puig de la Bellacasa's affective dimension of care moves the understanding of motherhood beyond a purely motivational role. Affect is not a pre-political emotion awaiting politicization; rather, it is itself political. Mothers' fear for their children's futures represents an embodied engagement with information about the climate crisis, shaping how that information is interpreted, valued and transformed into action. Eva resonates with this sentiment, stating, "We want to remind people emotionally about what the climate is heading toward . . . The deterioration of the climate . . . worsens the future. It was right then that it started, which is why we are called *mothers*. It concerns the next generation and the one after that." These statements exemplify a future-oriented temporal perspective that ties climate information to intergenerational responsibility (Rodela, 2024) and concern for long-term environmental futures (Ruddick, 1995; Shrum et al., 2023).

Other informants (Johanna, Karin, Erika) describe a pre-existing concern for the environment and a need for action that predates parenthood. Some of them had previously been involved in activism but struggled to find a community where they felt they belonged. According to several participants, Rebellmammorna fills this gap. The alignment of personal identity as a mother with the collective identity of the movement appears to activate participation (Polletta and Jasper, 2001). Karin, for instance, described struggling for a long time with the consequences of climate change. Before discovering Rebellmammorna, she lacked a space to process these emotions. For Karin, finding the group was a relief; she finally felt understood and able to share her concerns.

Erika reveals a contrasting position. She admits to stepping back from her commitment due to personal circumstances: her husband's promotion requires a security clearance that extends to his family, and she fears her activism could jeopardize his career. Erika prioritizes her family's immediate well-being over her engagement with Rebellmammorna. This experience highlights how the movement may be perceived in broader society and the risks associated with such visibility, including the vulnerabilities motherhood entails. The current case of the mother who lost her job in the energy department, mentioned in the introduction, illustrates these perceptions in practice.

Several informants (Elsa, Ida, Lisa, Malin, Karin, Erika) also demonstrate a strong reflexive awareness of the strategic "use" of motherhood to prevent them from being delegitimized by for example politicians. Malin explains: "Rebellmammorna has a rhetorical point . . . that there is this picture in society of motherhood, mother's care for her child, that is something so positive and so . . . that it becomes difficult to be angry about someone who says that 'I do this for my children' . . . and so it becomes more touching, so it is also a bit strategic . . . partly a strategic thought behind it in the communication . . . that we want . . . facts are presented all the time, but obviously it doesn't help, so that's why you have to try to reach out with feelings too."

She continues: "[] But it's harder to dismiss us as some kind of extremists . . . Or that we're seen as security threats and such. But it's harder with a knitting grandmother, to claim she's a great danger to the nation. Or a mother who says she cares about her children. So, we try to make ourselves a bit harder to demonize."

These statements reveal how motherhood is leveraged as a platform to reach the broader public. This confirms previous research by DiQuinzio (2006) who claimed that mothers are only seen as entitled to political participation in their role as mothers. However, in contrast to Di Quinzio's claim, the informants do not testify that they have been discredited as being too emotional and irrational in their role as mothers. Maternal identity appears to shape how information claims are received, suggesting it confers a form of social authority also described by Stavrianos (2014). Presenting themselves as peaceful and non-threatening is a crucial strategic choice; by rejecting civil disobedience and framing their actions through the lens of caring mothers, they aim to prevent opponents from undermining their credibility. A recurring theme from the interviews is the desire to distance themselves from the stereotypical image of activists as radical or extremist. The image of the caring mother effectively shifts this perception. However, despite their outreach as caring mothers, the informants testify discrediting on a political level, emphasizing the success of their strategy, because it shows that they put pressure on politicians.

Erika adds a marketing perspective: "From a purely marketing perspective, it's really good because it connects with those who don't already have a background in the environmental movement." She notes that many mothers are reluctant to engage in civil disobedience due to the risk of arrest and their responsibilities to their children. Consequently, Rebellmammorna serves as an entry point for those who wish to be active without coming into conflict with the law, a view supported by several other informants (Elsa, Ida, Lisa, Malin, Karin, Erika).

Finally, Elsa, Pernilla, Ida and Erika emphasize that time is a critical constraint. Erika says: "[Motherhood] is the strength, but at the same time it is also the weakness." While motherhood

enables activism, the practical limitations of parenting, particularly the lack of time for mothers with small children, simultaneously hinder participation.

The role of caring relationships

Results indicate that care and caring relationships are key to the interpretation, sharing and sustainability of climate information. The production and interpretation of climate information is deeply embedded in these relationships, where emotions, trust and expertise are intertwined.

Malin described a moment that made her decide to become a Rebellmamma. She witnessed her son's deep distress about the consequences of climate change at a time when he was already struggling with significant personal challenges. Malin said that: "And I feel that the only thing I can do is . . . I can't say that it will sort itself out. Because I don't believe that unless someone really does something. So then I feel that the only thing I can do to calm him is actually to do something. That someone does it. [] So I felt compelled to engage myself in some way." Malin felt the responsibility toward her son's well-being in that specific situation but also toward his future. The mother's turn to activism, as described by Malin, can be read through feminist care theory as a practice of sustaining livability for a dependent other. Drawing on [Puig de la Bellacasa \(2017\)](#), care is not simply an emotional disposition but an embodied, political commitment that materializes concern in the world. Malin's activism extends intimate care into the public sphere; she is trying to shape the conditions that will impact her son's future. As Puig de la Bellacasa emphasizes, what matters is not merely expressing that someone cares but doing the work that sustains futures. In this light, the mother's activism fulfills a dual function, it reassures the child emotionally while at the same time acting materially in the social and political conditions that make that future possible.

This example shows that the three dimensions of care ([Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017](#)) are not sequential steps but a simultaneous loop. Their affective love for their children exposes the ethical impossibility of individual protection, which necessitates political collective action. Conversely, their political struggle is fueled by and sustains their affective love.

The informants agreed that the group itself functions as a critical source of support and sustained ongoing activism. They emphasize feelings of support by the group as essential to cope with climate activist engagement in the long run, highlighting how relational support sustain engagement over time. Participation was also described as a form of mutual care and emotional processing. Karin even put selfcare over the broader goal of the movement: "For me, Rebellmammorna is not primarily emotional, for me, Rebellmammorna is self-therapy. For me, it's secondary that we reach out with our messages and that we network with others. For me, the primary thing is that we give each other strength and that we can swim up against [the surface] and get air."

The group gatherings help them manage anxiety and worry related to climate change. This dual orientation, toward personal well-being and collective action, also underscores the entanglement of individual motivation to collective engagement. This can be understood through [Puig de la Bellacasa's \(2017\)](#) dimensions of care as an inseparable combination of affective and political-material practices: the emotional work of managing fear is sustained through the material labor of gathering together and showing their concern collectively in public. This also aligns with the research by [Westwell and Bunting \(2020\)](#) about care among the group Extinction Rebellion and emphasizes caring relationships as an important impact on internal group cohesion.

Moreover, trust appeared to be a key factor in how the group agreed on and made sense of climate information. Lisa said: "I was engaged a bit in planning the manifestation. And that was really beautiful. It felt just right. And then that there were so many other people who thought exactly like me. And who saw that I saw. Because that is so incredible frustrating, to feel that you are the only one who sees the problem. And that was really beautiful. It felt really meaningful. But also, that you got a context where you could kind of rest in that you are surrounded by others who have the same thoughts, experiences, feelings."

Some of the informants (Malin, Elsa, Ida) also rely on the distributed expertise of fellow activists, as a resource for interpreting complex climate information. Elsa described, “You build up a network in social media and in real life with people who keep track . . . We have biologists, forest scientists but also psychologists and people who work in care, who together can provide a complex picture of the problem and of possible solutions of the problem.” For them, the group functions as an information resource. The statements of the informants also reveal that group identification provides a safe and trusted space for processing emotionally charged information, validating personal concerns and collectively negotiating meaning. Trust, in combination with repeated interactions, allows participants of *Rebellmammorna* to establish a shared interpretive framework, ensuring that information and concern are recognized, reinforced and circulated within the group.

Storytelling and rituals

The results reveal that stories and rituals function as means to express and enact the dimensions of care (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). Beyond motivation, motherhood also shapes the interpretation of climate information in deeply narrative ways. Informants transform motherhood and their self-image as mothers into stories that relate climate change to personal relations. Ida said: “. . . a climate movement . . . which is extremely focused on numbers, research and scientific evidence. But it also became too hard. If you wanted to impact the public it became too hard for many to receive it or to relate to it. So, then we also started to show climate anxiety among just mothers . . . What kind of future are my children heading toward? Will my children become climate refugees? Will there be a forest for my children or grandchildren to play in when they are growing up? And that one also started to act more based on emotions. That it became a complement to the logical, intellectual climate fight.”

This suggests that climate information is not only communicated through factual information but also through affective engagement (McCann, 2023). Maternal identity enables a form of emotional translation in which abstract climate information is framed through narratives of care, responsibility and concern for future generations. This illustrates how storytelling functions as a way of making sense of information (Gherardi, 2017; Nicolini, 2011), translating abstract scientific facts about climate change into personal meaningful and future-oriented narratives (e.g. Sorensen, 2023).

Several of the informants (Hanna, Karin, Erika, Pernilla) emphasized that the scientific background of climate change is often too hard to understand, and people find it hard to relate to, because it does not affect them directly. The consequences seem distant and therefore easy to ignore (Whitmarsh, 2008). Pernilla explains: “We have our children’s names (on the signs), and then it’s also easier for the public to feel that this is this person’s child I’m fighting for”. According to her, building up an emotional and personal relationship helps people to relate to the problem. By connecting scientific information to the imagined experiences of their children and grandchildren, informants enact a form of relational reasoning in which emotion and identity structure understanding and concern. This can be related to Knops’ climate-change-imaginaries (Knops, 2021). As earlier research implicates (e.g. Lynn, 2018; Bruine de Bruin *et al.*, 2024), scientific reports, policy documents and activist materials are not received and discussed as detached data but interpreted through emotions intensifying their meaning and urgency. Ritualized performances function not only as public expressions of concern but also as shared practices that stabilize shared interpretations of climate information. Through recurring acts such as singing, sitting together in public spaces and displaying signs with their children’s names, participants enact climate information and rehearse a collective narrative centered on care and future responsibility (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017).

An important part of the informants’ engagement is the manifestations where the participants often gather in a circle at public places. This circle, where they used to sit and sing accompanied by handwritten signs, often with the names of their children on it seems to function as kind of ritual to them. The informants describe that, among others, music during

manifestations intensifies emotional engagement and reinforces collective meaning. These practices illustrate how information in this climate activist setting is produced and sustained through embodied, emotional and relational engagements, resonating with [Alaimo's \(2010\)](#) emphasis on the material and affective entanglements of bodies and environments.

One example several informants (Karin, Eva, Johanna and Hanna) mentioned as a very positive experience are the so called "silent walks" organized by the group. During these walks, the participants walk slowly beside each other in silence on a prescribed route through the city center. The informants describe these walks as very strong emotional expressions. Johanna explains: "When we go on silent walks, for some it is balm to a wounded soul simply to see that we are there." The silent walks can be understood as embodied information practices through which climate information is not only expressed but also experienced collectively. The slow movement, shared silence and physical co-presence create a sensory and affective mode of engagement that differs from verbal or informational communication. In this sense, participation in these walks can be interpreted as a form of bodily entanglement ([Alaimo, 2010](#)) where information is understood through bodily and sensory experience rather than through propositional or discursive forms alone. Moreover, these walks create spaces where political action and emotional support intertwine. These marches demonstrate how care, affect and material bodies co-produce both political engagement and activist well-being. The manifestations bring together the three dimensions of care defined by [Puig de la Bellacasa \(2017\)](#): the affective, through the emotions expressed for their children; the material, by demonstrating and enacting care in a public space where the bodies of the mothers become the medium of the message; and the ethico-political, the collective attempt to impact and change the future for future generations.

However, the interviews also reveal a dilemma with this "soft" approach of activism: It is appreciated by the participants, and they perceive positive feedback from their audience at the manifestations, but several of them claim that they receive little attention in news media (Erika, Elsa, Hanna, Eva). Karin resonates that activists who use a more violent outreach get more attention by the media. Despite their own outreach on media platforms such as Instagram, according to them the big newspapers (like "Dagens Nyheter"; DN) are important sources of information. The informants witnessed that they got more attention and being recognized after a report about them in DN, one of Sweden's big newspapers ([Grosshög and Hansson, 2024](#)). Karin is disappointed that their outreach does not lead to greater media attention. On the other hand, she emphasizes that they got more attention on a local level where they are only reported positively. These perspectives shed light on the complexity of information sharing in a political/activism context.

Beyond this, rituals seem also to be used to clarify the aims of the group. Lisa explains: "We go through principles at the beginning of demonstrations, so people know what context they're in. It's not discussed much on Facebook. When you actually are at a demonstration, you get it a bit clearer". This statement also supports the perceived importance of personal meetings to foster collectivity and sustain activism, which is something also mentioned by several other informants.

Concluding discussion

In the context of the climate crisis, scientific facts alone often fail to mobilize public engagement or collective action. Despite the broad dissemination of climate information across media, institutions and education, key questions persist regarding how people come to care about climate information, act upon it and emotionally relate to it, dimensions essential for meaningful societal response ([Cole, 2023](#)). This article investigates these questions by analyzing the emotional and relational activities of participants in Rebellmammorna, the Swedish branch of climate activist group Mother of Rebellion.

The three main conclusions from the analysis are summarized in the following, along with a discussion on the dimensions which impact Rebellmammorna's information sharing practice.

The analysis shows that maternal identity is not only a source of motivation but also a central lens through which climate information is understood, translated into actionable information and shared with broader audiences

The analysis reveals motherhood as a complex theme that at the same time enables and prohibits information sharing.

While the data show that motherhood provides a unique entry point for climate activism (see previous research), motherhood is also used strategically. The informants are not “just being” mothers, they are performing a specific version of motherhood that is socially accepted, to get access to the public sphere.

However, the same identity also creates specific vulnerabilities, seen in Erika’s case, that emphasizes the fragility of this legitimacy. While motherhood grants a shield against being labeled “extremist”, it does not protect against structural consequences (like security clearances). Previous research has described maternity in activism as contradictory: it can function both as a source of authority and as a basis for discrediting women through their roles as mothers (DiQuinzio, 2006). The analysis confirms mother-identity as a source of authority. However, in contrast to earlier research that claimed motherhood is used to discriminate women, the analysis reveals an opposite picture: motherhood is perceived as a means of protecting activists from delegitimization. At the same time, it prohibits engagement due to time constraints as a mother.

The analysis illustrates that caring relationships create conditions through which climate information can be interpreted, shared and collectively stabilized over time

Through this caring relationships, emotion, trust and expertise work together in the production and interpretation of climate information and sustain engagement. The interviews emphasize that caring for a dependent is described as a motivation factor to engage in climate activism. Many of the informants are worried about the well-being of their children’s future. However, caring for their children goes beyond care in a specific situation, but supports long-term engagement to provide a safe future for them. This includes engagement to change future premises structurally. This emphasizes care as relational and infrastructural more than just as a moral obligation (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017).

While care for others is a recurring theme in the interviews, self-care appears as an additional important form of caring relation. Group cohesion depends on mutual care and provides a safe space for the informants. This leads to shared trust among the group and the perception of the group’s participants as trustworthy sources of information. The interviews reveal how entangled the three dimensions of care described by Puig de la Bellacasa are in the group of Rebellmammorna and how it affects their information sharing-practice.

Storytelling and rituals, including recurring symbolic acts at public manifestation, are detected as mechanisms that reinforce group identity, signal commitment and create shared emotional experiences

Thus, storytelling and rituals promote social cohesion and communicating collective values (Whitehouse and Lanman, 2014). Reoccurring manifestations (e.g. sitting together in a circle, silent walks) are identified as embodied expressions that connect bodily experiences to climate information (Alaimo, 2010) and enact stories relating to the dimensions of *motherhood* and *caring relationships* discussed above.

These expressions are used to bridge the gap from facts to affective engagement. This supports earlier research that emphasizes the problem that the consequences of climate change are too distant, both temporally and spatially (e.g. Whitmarsh, 2008). Previous research also implicates that activists use affective/emotional approaches to connect data and numbers to the “here and now” (e.g. Knops, 2021). Combining affect/emotion to care and motherhood, Rebellmammorna bridges also the gap to imagined futures.

While their “soft” and peaceful outreach attracts the public and sustain internal activism, it also leads to less media attention in comparison to a more violent outreach. This introduces a dilemma; while, as discussed above, motherhood and the silent and disarming outreach at manifestations protect them from delegitimization, the very same outreach technique leads to a lack of attention in media. This suggests that a care-based approach might more serve for long-term relational stability and internal group cohesion rather than short-term attention capture.

Overall, the findings illustrate that Rebellmammorn's grassroots climate movement can be understood as a site where scientific information is translated into situated, relational and emotionally grounded forms of information. Climate information emerges not only through transmission but also through situated, embodied and affective engagement impacted by relational care. This emphasizes the importance of emotional and community infrastructures alongside scientific data. Moreover, caregivers are detected as essential agents in the information landscape of climate change. This article contributes to a more comprehensive conceptualization of information sharing practices as inherently emotional, relational and embedded in everyday life and collective activism.

The interviews provide a rich data set. While this article focusses on maternal identity, caring relationships as well as storytelling and rituals, the empirical material also revealed the impact of material artefacts as important mediators of information in combination with the rituals at the manifestations. This will be investigated in more detail in a future article by the author.

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Notes

1. In this study, I use the Swedish name of the group not the international network name “Mother's Rebellion” because the informants described an emotional relation to the Swedish name.
2. The term is used by [Buzogány and Scherhauser \(2022\)](#) to describe the worldwide diffusion of a new type of climate protest by groups such as Fridays for Future, Extinction Rebellion, Ende Gelände, Just Stop Oil and The Last Generation due to a grown public awareness of the climate crisis.

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