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The Views and Movement of the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) Movement towards Global Capitalism

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ABSTRAK

Gerakan *Earth Liberation Front* (ELF) pada awalnya bagian dari gerakan lingkungan *Earth First!*, dan dalam aksinya bersifat menggunakan retorika agitatif dan kolaboratif. Namun pada tahun 1992, ELF memisahkan diri dengan gerakan *Earth First!* serta mengubah cara lewat aksi langsung mereka menyerang bentuk-bentuk yang merepresentasikan kapitalisme global. Ini kemudian menjadi hal yang menarik di mana artikel ini menganalisis pandangan gerakan ELF terhadap kapitalisme global lewat metode penelitian kualitatif. Penulis menggunakan kerangka konseptual *deep ecology* serta gerakan sosial dan struktur internasional. Dalam tipologi gerakan sosial, gerakan ELF termasuk kedalam gerakan *deep ecology* revolusioner di mana secara radikal melawan penyebab terjadinya kerusakan lingkungan hidup. ELF dalam pandangannya terhadap struktur internasional, dapat dilihat dari tiga sisi. Pertama, dalam sisi *state system*, ELF menganggap bahwa sistem yang terbentuk di negara-negara adalah sebuah bentuk kapitalisme yang telah merusak lingkungan hidup. Kedua, dalam sisi *international society*, ELF membentuk solidaritasnya dengan jejaring mereka yang telah ada dilebih 20 negara. Ketiga, dalam sisi *world society*, yaitu ELF mentransformasikan perubahan sosial yang revolusioner, menggantikan tatanan yang telah ada yaitu kapitalisme dengan tatanan *total liberation*. Namun, aksi dan pandangan dari gerakan ELF belum mampu mengubah struktur dari tatanan kapitalisme yang ada saat ini.

Kata kunci: *Earth Liberation Front*; Kapitalisme Global; Lingkungan Hidup; Gerakan Sosial

ABSTRACT

The Earth Liberation Front (ELF) movement was originally part of the Earth First! movement and uses agitative and collaborative rhetoric in its actions. However, in 1992, the ELF broke away from Earth First! by changing its methods to those of direct action, attacking entities and symbols that represent global capitalism. The ELF's departure becomes an exciting starting point to analyze the ELF's view toward global capitalism through qualitative research methods. We used a framework encompassing deep ecology, social movements, and international structures. In the typology of social movements, the ELF movement belongs to the revolutionary deep ecology movement typology,

which radically fights the causes of environmental damage. The ELF's view of the international structure can be seen from three views. First, the ELF considers that the state system formed is a form of capitalism that has damaged the environment. Second, on the level of international society, the ELF has formed solidarity with its existing network in more than 20 countries. Third, on the level of world society, ELF seeks revolutionary social transformation that replaces the existing capitalist order with an order of total liberation. However, the actions and views of the ELF movement have not successfully changed the structure of the existing capitalist order.

Keywords: Earth Liberation Front; Global Capitalism; Environment; Social Movement

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INTRODUCTION

Global companies' contribution to environmental damage implies that capitalism indirectly causes environmental damage. The extensive capital owned by these companies has been negligent of the environment, and their profits do not lead to the mitigation of the negative impacts caused by their activities on the environment. Aside from these companies, the state also plays a role because through its policies, the state grants operating licenses to companies, both global and national, to invest, expand, and engage in production and trade activities, which are likely to cause environmental damage. Additionally, some of the largest states produce fossil fuels through their companies, such as the United States (US), which is the largest, followed by Saudi Arabia, Russia, Canada, China, Iraq, Iran, United Arab Emirates, Brazil, and Kuwait (Rapier 2019).

Environmentally destructive activities by the state and corporations have led to protests from civil society. In Europe, in recent years, the Extinction Rebellion Movement has left several significant cities paralyzed in some parts due to protests. In addition, there is also the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) movement. The movement was founded in the UK in 1994 and has now spread to more than 20 countries. ELF's primary instrument is a direct action to prevent persisting damage to the environment. It was the opposite of the Extinction Rebellion group, which acts in big cities to paralyze some activities, such as occupying Greenpeace headquarters in 2018, demanding to send a letter to the UK government to focus on the issue of climate change (Taylor 2018).

In its actions, the ELF focuses on the parties directly involved in environmental destruction and demands them to take responsibility and play a significant role in protecting the environment. The ELF differs from other environmental movements' political directions and aims (Vanderheiden 2005, 438). Even though the ELF's actions are radical, the ELF never abuses and violates its obligations to fulfill the commitments contained in the ELF guidelines, which urge ELF members who are directly involved in mandatory actions "to prevent actions that can injure living beings" (Asal and Rethemeyer 2008, 245-247). Some of the direct actions taken by the ELF were quite extreme such as vandalism, arson, sabotage, and destruction of property belonging to monkey-wrenching. These are carried out to cause these companies significant economic and infrastructure losses (Nirbito 2013, 165).

The ELF, which was initially part of the Earth First!, works through agitative rhetoric such as threats of sabotage, physical barricades, and guerrilla theatre. They invite people with the same awareness of environmental issues to draw attention to them in public spaces (Short 1991, 172). However, the revolutionary ideology of the ELF rejected this framework. ELF activists expressed little interest in working collaboratively with other parts of the environmental movement, and some regard influencing public opinion as a distant goal compared to the direct and tangible destruction of the products of capitalism. The ELF often destroys large corporations, homes, and private vehicles, as well as various symbols of capitalism, as the aim of their attacks (Olson 2017, 13-14).

This anti-capitalist stance is nothing new among radical environmental and animal rights activists. On the other hand, criticism of capitalism and globalization arose in the late 1990s, especially after the Seattle protests in the fall of 1999, when those closely associated with anarchism and changing globalism began to influence these movements significantly. For them, the liberation of the earth has become inextricably linked with the abolition of capitalism and social liberation. The way to achieve this is not slow reform but revolutionary change. The ELF's actions represent their resistance to the global capitalist

system (Olson 2017, 13–14, Posluszna 2020, 10). Thus, violent action is somehow necessary for the ELF to achieve its goal of revolutionary social change.

Surprisingly, the ELF movement decided to break away from Earth First!. This shift exemplifies what sociologists David Pellow and Hollie Nyseth Brehm call a “frame transformation” in the social-ecological movement when activists adopt a paradigm of “total liberation” that links the oppression of animals, plants, and other living things and ecosystems with all forms of oppression (Olson 2017, 51–52). In other words, revolutionary social change will occur when the ELF movement eliminates the oppression oriented towards environmental and living issues.

In this study, we discuss the views of the ELF movement on global capitalism. Previous studies, which are also still limited, emphasize the ELF’s view of global capitalism but have not discussed it from the perspectives of deep ecology and its view of the international structure. Thus, this research is vital because it provides an overview of the ELF movement’s view of global capitalism using the concept of deep ecology and views of international structures in social movements.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Deep Ecology

In the twentieth century, the resistance movement against environmental destruction rose to the surface. This movement desired a significant change in human-environment relationships. They propose revisiting the concepts of metaphysics, cosmology, and environmental ethics toward nature. This movement is inspired by the deep ecology paradigm or what some academics have called deep ecology with eco-philosophy, new natural philosophy, radical ecology, and ecological revolution. All these concepts have similar meanings to the deep ecology paradigm (Devall 1980, 299-300). Bill Devall stated that the deep ecology approach fundamentally avoids the fact that rapid economic growth causes environmental damage (Devall 1980, 299). This approach only

focuses on raising general and basic assumptions or hypotheses regarding the dominant pattern of the causes of natural destruction (Devall 1980, 299–313; Situmorang 2013, 68).

According to Devall (1980), developed states in Europe and America tend to perceive the economy and technology as a benchmark of progress. The more advanced technology is, the more advanced the state. It also applies to improving the quality of services and goods. However, the government's priority of maximizing profit adversely impacts a crucial aspect for the survival of living things: the earth. The government will seek a maximum profit-oriented economy and ignore environmental issues. The government tends to focus only on short-term benefits without taking environmental damage seriously, which will harm humans long-term (Situmorang 2013, 68).

Devall in Situmorang (2013, 69–70) explained that deep ecology is fundamentally the premise of human's position in the universe. Humans have no right to feel superior to other creatures. Humans, according to Devall, are part of a creation process (Devall 1980, 303). Therefore, humans should take care of other living beings. However, the deep ecology movement differs from the environmental reform movement, which emphasizes pragmatic elements. The deep ecology movement does not just stop when it succeeds in closing down industries that are detrimental to the environment. They question the conventional patterns of modern society's way of think. This movement also provides an alternative way out by transforming values and social organization (Situmorang 2013, 69–70). This profound social transformation has penetrated economic and political organizations. (Jackson and Sorensen 2005, 330).

Based on this conceptualization, we identify the ELF as a deep ecology social movement. The ELF insists on a radical change to all actions that destroy the environment, for which they prefer to use direct methods without state or other intermediary actors. Indeed, the ELF opposes state structures and parties, which are considered part of the problem of environmental damage.

Social Movements and the International Structure

A movement has a vital role in achieving peace. As such, movements by social groups are not only considered pressure group movements but “ideological protagonists” with great goals for the common good (Ceadel 2000, 6). Based on Ceadel’s perspective (2000), a social movement is not limited to war and peace perspectives but broader studies such as analyzing the actions that occur in social movements. Social movements emerge because of a drive. The relationship between movements and their drivers can be explained deeper using the classical theories of international relations such as realism, rationalism, and revolutionism. These three classical theories aim to show the influence and role of social movements at the system, the international community, and the world community levels (Wight 1992, 6).

The existence of social movements that try to change the order of the international system is very much at odds with the main idea that the realist approach applies, which sees the international system as unchangeable. The realist approach views the prevailing international system as anarchic, arguing that threats can come at any time. This anarchic system forces countries to intensify their capabilities in maintaining security stability. When social movements try to change the system, countries will suppress the movement with the necessary means. For example, it is by collaboration with established state institutions. A realist movement is a nationalist movement whose objective is not to change the system. The action is formed through cooperation between state institutions and movements by which the government controls them indirectly. These institutions have less power to voice their aspirations independently. Even these institutions perceived protecting their national identity as a duty (Davies and Peña 2017, 14).

However, for Davies and Peña (2017), there are differences in revolutionary social movements rooted in the desire to seize power or a new order that is considered better than the old one. In an extreme environment, there is a “deep ecology,” which aims to reject the institutions that support the return of a pre-industrial lifestyle. One of the nationalist movements that emerged between the realist and revolu-

tionary extremes was the movement described in the liberal tradition. According to Davies and Peña (2017), this movement focuses more on working from within, in contrast to the revolutionary movement, which focuses on reforming the existing order.

This table below classifies social movement interactions based on three classical approaches:

Table 1. Typologies of Social Movement – World Order Interaction

	Realist Movements	Rationalist Movements	Revolutionist Movements
State System	Collaboration (system preservation)	Negotiation (pluralist)	Antagonism (national-cosmopolitan struggles)
International Society	Negotiation (pluralist)	Collaboration (system reform)	Negotiation (solidarist)
World Society	Antagonism (national-cosmopolitan struggles)	Negotiation (solidarist)	Collaboration (system transformation)

Source: Davies & Peña (2017)

The revolutionary movement is antagonistic toward the state and can collaborate with the world community to seek world transformation. The realist movement is too focused on the state system, which is in line with their main idea of being state-centric. However, the realist movement has a more antagonistic relationship with the world community than the state system (Davies and Peña 2017, 18). There are differences in their negotiations style among the three approaches. The realist movement might negotiate based on pluralism, while the revolutionary movement is more cooperative and emphasizes solidarity and equality in negotiations. However, revolutionary states in the national system have more cooperative relations with revolutionary agents in world society, such as the Bolshevik Revolution. Furthermore, Davies and Peña (2017) explained the character of a revolutionary movement: the realist model movement has a close relationship with the state system, but this movement has limited action on the state system. Their actions are not limited compared to the conservative movement in pro-

protecting the existing social conditions and norms by spreading the values of these actions.

The ELF is categorized as a revolutionary movement in the typology of social movements and world structures. They want to change the structure of the world radically. This structure they wish to fight, and change is global capitalism, which they consider to damage the environment and develop a new alternative structure. So, they build solidarity and collaborate with the world's civil society networks in more than 20 countries.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative method. Qualitative research relies on principles from the interpretive or critical social sciences. Qualitative research also speaks the language of “cases and contexts” and cultural meanings. The emphasis is on conducting a detailed examination of some instances that arise naturally in social life (Neuman 2013, 188). In this study, the case, context, and meaning discussed are the views of the ELF movement towards global capitalism.

According to qualitative research data collection techniques, almost anything that stores human experience can be used as data. It can be text such as interview transcripts, documents, diaries, letters, and notes taken during focus groups or visuals such as video recordings, photos, pictures, and paintings. Data can also come from existing sources that the researcher has not sought. The data may come from the information contained in the document, including a reflection of its quality (Boeije 2010, 57). This study employs secondary data from the journal, books, official websites, news, working papers, and textual data considered valid as references. Thus, this study employs the study of documents containing secondary data. Our primary data is mainly from the US government's reports, which explain the actions of the ELF movement in carrying out its destructive actions.

Then the data is triangulated with another source. Triangulation aims to verify the consistency of the data sources for analysis (Boeije 2010, 176–177). In this study, we compared one data with another to

analyze the ELF's view of global capitalism. We then examined the data for consistency and analyzed them using the concepts of deep ecology, social movements, and international structure.

DISCUSSION

The Emergence of the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) Movement

The ELF began its first operations in the UK in 1992, started by a group of Earth First activists who were frustrated by their organization's desire to abandon illegal tactics (Taylor 2005, 521). In 1997, the action took place in the United States, and the perpetrators began handing out communiques claiming responsibility to environmental activists Leslie James Pickering and Craig Rosebraugh, first via mail and telephone, and then by email (Rosenbraugh 2004, 20).

In 1994, the ELF rapidly spread throughout Europe through roadshows. The ELF spread to countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Finland, Russia, Poland, Spain, France, New Zealand, and Scandinavian countries. The rapid spread of the ELF caught the world's attention due to its publicized attacks (Covill 2008, 78).

According to Covill (2008, 87), the ELF is organized into small, autonomous sections that operate independently and anonymously from each other and the general public. This movement contains no formal hierarchy or leadership. This movement also operates under an ideology. If one believes in the ideology and follows the ELF guidelines, one can take action and become part of the movement. Anyone can get involved. Individuals are generally known to work in affinity groups, known as cells, which are usually self-funded. The autonomous aspect of the small ELF sections ensures that if an ELF part is infiltrated and betrayed, it will not affect or interfere with the movement. Covill (2008, 87) also stated that arresting the entire cell will not affect the movement's structure. They use guerrilla tactics because of the success of various resistance movements in warfare.

The number of ELF members is impossible to estimate internationally or in any country. Since 1997, ELF attacks in the United States have not been confined to a specific region. The number of ELF actions has increased significantly across the country. Based on the increase in attacks on public places on environmental grounds across the country, membership is expected to increase. The ELF attributed two main reasons to explain its increase in membership. They see it as evidence that more and more people realize the dire environmental conditions and extreme economic exploitation of the environment and life on the planet by individuals and corporations (Covill 2008, 87).

The ELF claimed the rising number of its members was because of the legal system and government bureaucracy's failure to prevent social change caused by the government. If people are serious about stopping the destruction and exploitation of all life on this planet, they must also seriously acknowledge the need to engage in direct action campaigns personally. ELF cells consisting of several people can cause tremendous economic damage with just one action. The ELF insisted that people should not be trained to involve themselves in the ELF. People need to be willing to care enough about life on this planet to make a difference. They regard every action taken on behalf of the earth as a defense of the environment. ELF justifies its action as a natural response to threats that destroy life on earth (Covill 2008, 87–88). In every action, ELF justifies violent attacks based on its objective to protect the earth from damage. These attacks were directed against actors the ELF deems responsible for environmental damage.

As previously explained, the ELF movement does not have a leader. Instead, it is an international underground movement that consists of autonomous groups and carries out direct action. ELF relies on leaderless resistance, which depends on its members' commitment to an ideology and a set of common goals embodied in the movement's goals and guidelines (Leader and Probst 2003, 2–3):

- To inflict economic damage on those who take advantage of the destruction and exploitation of the environment;

- To expose and educate the public about the atrocities committed against the earth and whatever is in it;
- To take all precautions against injuring animals, humans, and non-humans.

The ELF as a Deep Ecology Movement

The ELF is needed in society to protect the natural world from further anthropogenic destruction. They also deplore the loss of natural diversity in the face of civilization, promote the radical decentralization of power or the abolition of the power of corporations and the state altogether, and aim to restore human relations with the natural world (Parson 2008, 54). It was emphasized in the ELF communique during the Beltane communiqué in July 1997:

“Welcome to the struggle of all species to be free. We are the burning rage of this dying planet. The war of greed ravages the earth, and species die out every day. ELF works to speed up industry collapse, scare the rich, and undermine the state’s foundations. We embrace social and deep-ecology as a practical resistance movement. We have to show the enemy that we are serious about defending what is sacred. Together we have teeth and claws to match our dreams. Our greatest weapons are imagination and the ability to strike when least expected.” (Pickering 2006, 18).

In the part of the speech above, the ELF makes its deep ecology perspective a justification for fighting symbols that are considered damaging to the environment. The ELF believes destructive states and companies can be revoked through adequate economic damage. By utilizing direct destructive action, the group ruined the symbols and facilities of states and corporations considered environmental destroyers. This form, ecotage, is not an ordinary strike. It plays a part in marking the shift from radical to revolutionary environmental action. In addition, ecotage is trying to question the condition of social, economic, and political, which was destructive. Through ecotage, the campaigners

demand to weaken the existing reality so they can change it. What has been stated in the communique explained the ELF's position as an umbrella group for all who wish to be involved in revolutionary action (Parson 2008, 53–59).

The ELF can also be seen as a deep ecology movement from its struggle to achieve radical social transformation. They wish to change the current structure of the world through direct action by attacking public facilities (property, residential buildings, supermarkets) owned by the state and corporations. The ELF wants to transform the current structure into a new social structure. They oppose the global capitalist structure, which is environmentally dangerous and individualistic but neglects the environmental damage.

The ELF's View of the International Structure

The ELF's View on the State System

The ELF defines natural law as the dependence on substances in a clean natural environment that allows all lives to exist, pure air, water, and soil. Since the industrial revolution, the westernized way of life has violated natural law completely. All living things have the right to living necessities, such as shelter, healthy food (consisting of organic and locally grown items free from genetic modification), and health care. There is no other reason than greed and selfishness as to why most hoarding and monetary wealth come at the expense of sacrificing others, be it human or non-human. The ELF ideology regards the various social and political problems that the world faces today as symptoms of a bigger issue (Covill 2008, 89).

The activists who participate in the ELF have a strong understanding of the environmental damage currently taking place on earth. These activists further reveal how environmental damage resists and strive to address the systemic causes of this phenomenon (Hernandez 2007, 296–297). The systemic causes of environmental degradation can be traced back to rampant capitalism, which Ruth Colker calls “hypercapitalism” (Colker 1998, xi). He believes hypercapitalism is a

form of capitalism that is “absolutely inseparable from laissez-faire economics and consequently neglects other aspects such as health and well-being” (Colker 1998, xi). Under hypercapitalism, policies are driven by powerful passions for utility and efficiency, measured through the capitalist class. This pursuit of utility and efficiency is called “ethics of improvement.” This is defined as shared economic and political dynamic defines all profitable production as “improvement” regardless of its secondary effects, even if those secondary consequences include poverty, environmental degradation, or exploitation of society (Bookchin 1995, 66).

According to Covill (2008, 89-90), the ELF believes that one way to stop the problem of global capitalism that is damaging the environment is to target its root causes directly. The ELF maintains that the root cause of this problem is the political and social ideology that has become a substantial order in today’s world. Moreover, capitalism has created a permissive mindset, environmental destruction, and the unequal distribution of capitalist wealth that is prominent in Western civilization, which has caused the current state of poverty in various parts of the world (Covill 2008).

The ELF targets the perpetrators, especially capital owners, of environmental damage. In one explicit statement, the ELF stated, “the earth is not dying, it is being killed, and those who are killing it have names and addresses” (Hernandez 2007, 297). Therefore, the ELF includes symbols of global capitalism such as states, multi-national corporations (MNCs), and individuals as their targets. From the ELF’s early years in 1994-1996, attacks on McDonald’s and other fast-food franchises were carried out in Germany and Poland. In 1994, Schiphol International Airport in Amsterdam was sabotaged when an ELF activist drove a stolen car into a newly built flight tower, and at the same time, in the Netherlands and Germany, automotive dealers were vandalized and destroyed as a warning to the police not to interfere with the ELF’s actions (Best, and Nocella 2006, 54).

The ELF’s View towards International Society

The ELF movement builds solidarity among its activists by establishing a network of fellow activists in more than 20 countries. This solidarity exists as a common ground to fight against the structure of global capitalism that has damaged the environment. It is inferred from the ELF communique to Gifford Pinchot National Forest, WA, July 27, 2001:

“...We want to be clear that all oppression is linked, just as we are all linked, and we believe in a diversity of tactics to stop earth rape and end all domination. Together we can destroy this patriarchal nightmare, which is currently in the form of techno-industrial global capitalism. We desire an existence in harmony with the wild based on equality, love, and respect. We stand in solidarity with all resistance to this system, especially those who are in prison, disappeared, raped, tortured ... We are all survivors and will not stop!” (Pickering 2006, 50–51).

The ELF movement is also open to collaboration through solidarity with other movements that align with the ELF’s visions and missions. Several movements that have the same goals as the ELF are the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), the Federal Anarchist Network (FAI), and the International Revolutionary Front (IRF). The shared visions and missions of the four movements form a connection to build strong solidarity in achieving their goals. The ELF and the ALF have more robust solidarity than the other three movements (US Department of Justice 2007, 3–4).

The relationship between the ELF and the ALF activists was built through two activities. In a report by the US Department of Justice (2007), they first met the World Trade Organization (WTO) during an environmental protest. The second activity was through Book Club when ELF activists received instructions on various pieces of training that would assist them in carrying out attacks on their targets. This training includes critical capture, target reconnaissance, computer security, encrypted messaging, and the creation of mechanical and electrical

timing devices used to initiate fire attacks (US Department of Justice 2007, 3–4).

The ELF builds solidarity with other movements through their destructive actions. One example of this act of solidarity was the ELF activists' thwarting of the Scottish Coal, a coal mine in Scotland, in 2010. This action is a form of solidarity in protecting the environment from actors who want to destroy it. An activist to Indymedia Scotland stated this:

“Sabotage against the coal industry will continue until its expansion is halted. Autonomous environmentalists did this action in solidarity with the people of South Lanarkshire [Scotland], who are fighting to save their community and their health from the coal industry. It is a form of solidarity with people worldwide, including Columbia and India, fighting for their lives against the coal industry.” (Loadenthal 2013, 40).

The key to ELFs was forming a network to destroy the entities of capitalism damaging the environment. However, many ELF activists were arrested by the police, especially in the massive arrests in the US in 2005, the emergence of new ELF movements spread throughout the world through the solidarity acts of attacking public facilities without harming humans. Through these acts, the movement (Loadenthal 2013) spread across more than 20 countries and partnered with several parties. In recent years, the ELF has collaborated on many of the attacks in Europe, Asia, and the Americas that were claimed by the Federation of Informal Anarchists (FAI) and the International Revolutionary Front (IRF).

To the ELF, solidarity is a unity of interest among a group, and unity is defined as “unity of purpose or action.” If someone expresses solidarity with the ELF, that person must have a goal to stop environmental damage. Solidarity is formed not when one does nothing yet speaks of how much one supports direct action, but when one employs destructive actions because the destroyers of the environment must be fought, and one person's voice will not work (Marshall 2003, 20). The

ELF's resistance aims to protect the earth and form a new social order to replace the old order that is destructive to the environment.

The ELF's View towards World Society and Total Liberation

The ELF sees countries tend to be influenced by a capitalist political system. As a result, the state favors the capitalists, prioritizing economic growth by exploiting natural resources rather than balancing with environmental constraints. The state's alignment with the capitalist system can be observed in the policies they issue; this affects all aspects of human life (Nirbito 2013, 169). The ELF sees that the global capitalist system causes environmental problems to persist today. Suppose the ELF enters the political system by assuming power, but the political order or system remains capitalist. In that case, the ELF's entry into politics will not bring significant changes, and it cannot achieve its goals. Thus, the existence of a capitalist order that prioritizes personal gain while disregarding the environmental losses that it causes fuels the ELF to work to subvert the system.

The ELF movement strives to realize a social transformation, namely the total liberation of the existing structure destroying the environment. According to Pellow and Brehm (2015), total liberation is a social transformation that seeks to restructure human-nonhuman relations with ecosystems and the guiding discourse and ideas that support it. Total liberation describes that "animals and humans are inherently the same" (Pellow and Brehm 2015, 194) and that activists employ direct action like economic sabotage directed against symbols considered forms of capitalism, imperialism, and oppression. Total liberation consists of four elements: (1) ethics of justice and anti-oppression towards humans, non-humans, and ecosystems; (2) anarchism; (3) anti-capitalism; and (4) the use of direct action (Pellow and Brehm 2015, 193–1934).

1. Ethics of justice and anti-oppression towards humans, non-humans, and ecosystems;

Activists generally define justice as eliminating the conditions that produce injustice in the first place (Pellow and Brehm 2015, 194). For the ELF, the ethic of justice is linked to the language

of “rights” and liberation, which argues that ecosystems, animals, and people should be free from oppression and harm. Therefore, justice and anti-oppression are aimed toward the environment.

2. Anarchism

The ELF movement organically rejects all forms of hierarchy. It supports anarchism, which rejects all forms of authority and bases itself on mutual assistance and cooperation. Anarchists are not only critical of the state but are also against the development of the state. They reject conventional forms of a state due to concerns that such forms of power are inherently corrupt and tend to exercise what Max Weber calls a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force (Pellow and Brehm 2015, 197). ELF activists view the state monopoly as a legitimate function that extends to social control over a wide range of populations, both human and non-human. ELF movement perceived the state’s domination over living and non-living things as practices reinforcing patriarchy, racism, class inequality, and heteronormativity (Pellow, and Brehm 2015, 197–199). The anarchism embodied by the ELF is the absence of boundaries that separate humans and the environment. In their view, the presence of a state entity results in forming these boundaries, which causes environmental damage; the ELF, therefore, aims to eliminate the state.

3. Anti-capitalism

Anarchism stands in stark contrast to capitalism. Suppose capitalism is an inherently hierarchical system of production and social relations based on labor exploitation and the working-class ecosystem. In that case, the ELF has every reason to oppose it. Capitalism requires a continuous food supply from ecological wealth and other living things. Workers ensure the flow of these resources, and consumers buy and consume products. The capitalist system utilizes workers, the environment, and animals as commodities to be exploited. Moreover, a global capitalist economy treats humans and the environment as the same exploitable resources (Pellow and Brehm 2015, 199–200). Therefore, the ELF

adopted an ideology that contains its values—one that would be a distinct ideology when a branch of anarchism that opposes capitalism forms a separate ideology called anti-capitalism.

4. The use of direct action

The final element of total liberation suggests direct destructive action. Direct action is a way to fight injustice against the repression of living beings. The action can take many forms, including mobilizing people to prevent or advocate for specific policies or practices, property damage, and personal confrontation. Direct action is not just about confronting the authorities and forcing them to follow a particular order. It is also about transforming power relations in society to ensure that future practices will emerge from a different worldview than the one dominant today (Pellow and Brehm 2015, 201–203).

Table 2. ELF Attacks from 1992 to 2018

Action	Location	Target
	England (1992)	They were stopping peat extraction from Thorne Moors Fisons company. The company's losses reached US\$100,000 (Best and Nocella 2006, 51–52).
	Australia (1993-1994)	They are burning the French Embassy in protest against France's nuclear tests in the South Pacific (Best and Nocella 2006, 53).
	Germany and Poland (1994)	The ELF attacked McDonald's and other fast food franchises (Best and Nocella 2006, 54).
	Germany (1997)	Detonation of bombs inside empty buildings belonging to a German company associated with toxic waste disposal (Best and Nocella 2006, 54–55).
	USA (1998)	The ELF claimed responsibility for burning five buildings and four chairlifts at the Mount Vail ski resort in Vail, Colorado, causing more than \$12 million in damage (Greenfield 2012).
Ecotage	USA (1999)	Two fishing boats caught fire on August 7, 1999, in the vicinity of a veterinarian's residence who had worked as a fur farmer in Michigan (SPL Center 2005).
	USA (2000)	November 27, 2000, in Colorado, the ELF set fire to one of the new luxury homes. The ELF then sent a note to the Boulder Weekly newspaper: "Viva La Revolution!" (SPL Center 2005).
	USA (2001)	The ELF set off a firebomb that caused \$7 million in damage at the University of Washington Center for Urban Horticulture, Seattle, on May 21, 2001 (Bernton and Clarridge 2006).
	USA (2004)	Two houses were destroyed, and the other was almost burned in Snohomish, Washington, on April 20, 2004. The act caused \$1 million in damage (Bach 2005).
	USA (2005)	The ELF attempted to burn down a house under construction in Sammamish, Washington, on April 13, 2005, and spread a banner reading "Where are all the trees? Burn, destroy, burn. E.L.F" (MIPT Terrorism 2005).

Ecotage	Canada (2006)	A fire partially destroyed a house built at 75 Summit Ridge on June 27, 2006, in Ontario, Canada, causing an estimated \$200,000 in losses (Covill 2008, 6).
	Mexico (2008)	The attack in Mexico City, Mexico, involved throwing half a dozen Molotov cocktails into the tren férreo (metro train), the sabotage against the Telmex company, and the throwing of Molotov cocktails at a Banamex ATM (Bite Back 2008).
	Mexico (2009)	The ELF claims the burning of an excavator in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico (Bite Back 2009).
	Russia (2010)	A bulldozer tracked down by a group of ELF activists was used as part of a gentrification project (Bite Back 2010).
	Ukraine (2012)	ELF activists in the Ukrainian city of Ternapol destroyed an excavator of a local property company because they viewed the property development as compromising the city's green park (Bite Back 2012).
	Chille (2013)	Strike on agricultural industry exhibition in Chilean museum by ELF and ALF. They believed that this exhibition had exploited animals (Bite Back 2013).
	Greece (2015)	The ELF used three incendiary devices to destroy the building entrance and three vehicles (one truck and two vans) belonging to the poultry company on Agios Pavlos Str. In Peristeri, Greece (Bite Back 2015).
	Chille (2017)	The ELF also carried out an attack aimed at countering forest exploitation, placing a bomb in the truck of the Arauco forest company in the city of Arauco, Chile, on August 4, 2017 (Bite Back 2017).
Vandalism	New Zealand (1993-1994)	They vandalized McDonald's restaurants with pro-forest slogans (Best and Nocella 2006, 53).
	The Netherlands (1994)	ELF made an 18-month vandalism campaign against road construction in the Netherlands (Best and Nocella 2006, 19).
	USA (1996)	Sprayed "504 YEARS GENOCIDE" and "ELF" paint on the walls. Activists performed similar actions on the same day against the public relations office and McDonald's restaurant (Best and Nocella 2006, 52-55).
	USA (2002)	Two hundred minks were released from the Mindek mink farm, Pennsylvania (Bite Back 2003).
	USA (2003)	The ELF cut the tires of eight Boise Cascade company haul trucks and two trailers in Portland in mid-October 2003, pasted locks, and painted slogans on the main entrance to the company building (Center of Animal Liberation Affairs 2004).
	Italy (2011)	The ELF sabotaged supermarkets with molten metal as a form of solidarity with the activists detained by the state (Bite Back 2011).
	Iran (2014)	On March 21, 2014, the ELF took its first action in Iran by vandalizing the city of Sabzevar. This action was motivated by cutting two old trees in the city, which they believed had exploited the environment (Bite Back 2014).
	Italy (2018)	The ELF sabotaged two Benetton perfume shops on January 29, 2018 (Bite Back 2018).

Source: Compiled by writers

The sequence and examples of the ELF's actions involved violence. We view these actions as ELF's representation of an ecology movement by fighting the growing economic and technological progress that is considered damaging to the environment. These attacks in the form of ecotage and vandalism send out the message that with a deep ecology

view, they aim to completely transform the capitalist system towards anarchism that upholds environmental values. They try to achieve the goal through their network of cells in various states by direct actions. It conveyed that direct actions are performed to strengthen solidarity based on a shared ideology and view of anti-capitalism. Deep ecology is the view that they have which then becomes the actions of attacks on the symbols of global capitalism so that there is a link between the action and a view or ideology of the ELF. The ELF's view of the state system, international society, and world society manifests in violent actions to achieve their goals. Like deep ecology, the ELF's ideas and actions are interrelated and support each other.

CONCLUSION

The ELF movement is ideologically opposed to the global capitalist order and employs destructive methods to fight entities or symbols that represent global capitalism. However, the same order that the ELF wishes to transform persists. The free market remains firmly in place. The state, corporations, and individuals are still investing to maximize profit. Furthermore, environmental destruction remains prevalent due to global capitalism. Until today, ELF's violent strategy has been unsuccessful.

We encourage further research on the ELF movement, especially its strategies to alter the order of global capitalism, which is yet to show success. On a more practical level, we suggest that the ELF movement rethink its strategy to change the capitalist order, as its current destructive strategy has not proven effective.

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