

Settler Environmental Activism: A Transnational/National Paradox?

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Abstract

This paper attempts to clarify a newly recognized paradox in the environmental activism literature: while environmental problems are inherently transnational and while it is often assumed environmentalism is a transnational, if not global, phenomenon, recent research shows environmental contention as predominantly *national*. I situate current environmental activism within the social movement and environmental politics literature (often European focused) and compare this literature to the actions and interpretations of major environmental groups in three “settler” societies, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. Based on this comparison, I argue that environmental contention is indeed nationally rooted, yet there is evidence of burgeoning transnational environmental activism. Two patterns are significant: groups from developed nations assisting the capacity building of groups in neighbouring developing nations and ecosystemic or bioregional partnerships and campaigns. This may signal a shift in ecological contention to ecosystem-based environmentalism across the developing-developed divide.

Introduction

The global environmental movement has multiplied and strengthened in the last twenty years. Many pressing environmental problems know no boundaries, such as forest and biodiversity losses, depletion of the ozone layer, global climate change and pollution of transboundary waters. In response, national environmental organizations have increasingly cooperated with each other, building a global environmental movement (Durbin and Welch, 2002: 215).

Global environmentalism will no longer be regarded as exceptional because, at least in context and awareness, all environmentalism must henceforth be global (Caldwell, 1992: 73-74).

[T]he transnationalization of environmentalism is at best limited.... (Rootes, 2005: 22).

Environmental movements are increasingly considered global or at least transnational social movements, perhaps paralleling a rising global or transnational civil society. While this seems to make intuitive sense (environmentalism commonly responds to inherently transnational issues that seem to require transnational responses), these claims and assumptions are now challenged by recent work on the subject.

A striking and prolific example is the work of the European research group, Transnational Environmental Activism (TEA), coordinated by Christopher Rootes out of the University of Kent at Canterbury.¹ This group is committed to addressing key gaps in this field of academic analysis, including the neglected issues of “the emergence of new forms of environmental activism,” “ways in which environmental movement organisations have responded to the opportunities and constraints of Europeanisation” and “to examine changes in environmental movement organisations and their relationships with other actors within and outside the wider environmental movement” (School of Social Policy, 2004).

Seven years after the TEA’s commencement, one finding gathers strength: transnational environmental activism is actually quite limited. For instance, Rootes’ 2005 chapter “A Limited Transnationalization?” succinctly demonstrates that while environmental issues are transnational perhaps more than any other global social justice concern, much environmental social movement activism in response to these issues remains nationally focused. At the same time, he notes elements of transnationalism at work within the environmental movements he studies, for instance in social movements’ global framing and their aspirations to create a truly global movement.

At least in the literature, the transnational/national tensions of environmentalism form a significant debate needing further refinement. I focus on two crucial questions: Is

¹ I would like to thank Christopher Rootes for providing me with TEA project publication lists.

transnationalism environmental activism a fact or academic wishful thinking? And if transnational environmental activism is occurring, what are its specific trends?

To attempt a response to these questions I scan the literature along its central division, the divide between those arguing environmental activism is transnational and those arguing it is nationally rooted. I group the literature by perspective and survey it along several major discussions: the current transnationality of environmental social movements (alongside weakened nation states) and the opportunities for environmental social movement transnationality, versus the current national orientation of environmental social movements (alongside states retaining a strong role and exhibiting significant variation in environmentalism, as opposed to convergence regardless of nation state), and the barriers to transnationalism. Next, in the spirit of extending the European TEA study, I present my analysis of current major environmental groups' orientations in three "settler" countries, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.

Based on these cases, in the conclusion I argue we can find confirmation for national rootedness, or "rooted enviropolitans," yet also significant evidence of burgeoning transnationalism along two specific patterns: environmental groups from developed nations helping groups in neighbouring developing nations to build capacity for environmental protection and sustainable development, as well as environmental groups forming bioregional or ecosystemic partnerships on issues transcending national boundaries.

More generally, these points may join work giving insight into contemporary social changes. In particular, transnational contention is an important aspect of "globalization," the concept of our time. New forms of environmental contention could represent new levels or expressions of power contestation, and perhaps therefore reveal fissures to be exploited in the current political economic structure, new avenues or methods to change the current order.

At the same time, this work serves a particular function in my research as it is my first cut into environmental politics debates in these three country cases. By studying this slice of the debate I attempt to define useful dissertation questions. This is an initial step toward building theory and exploring cases to inform dissertation work.

I. Surveying the Literature²

I have assembled a short but essential list of recent texts on social movements, with emphasis on environmental movements. Note, however, that these represent only one slice of the environmental social movement field. For instance, in these selected works focused on various parts of Europe and the U.S., the "global south" is conspicuously missing. Future reading must address these gaps. This admittedly narrow body of literature, however, does speak clearly to the question of what the "reality" of environmental social movements looks like, with texts pointing to both poles of

² I thank Sidney Tarrow, Maxwell M. Upson Professor of Government, Cornell University, for his comments on the literature review portion of this paper, as well as Bogdan Vasi, Assistant Professor, School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University, and Daniel Sherman, Assistant Professor, Environmental Studies, University of Puget Sound for suggesting key texts in this field.

transnationalism and nationalism. As well, the texts speak well together on environmental social movements' opportunities for transnationalism and their barriers to it.

But first, what do I mean by "transnationalism"? As Tarrow and McAdam explain, this is different from "globalization" which implies "a phenomenon evenly distributed on a global scale" (qtd. 123). Instead, in della Porta and Tarrow's terms, a transnational social movement refers to action focused, influenced, or happening beyond the local or national level that can be differentiated along four processes: *diffusion* (when ideas, targets, practices, and frames spread across countries with no necessary significant relationships across those borders), *domestication* or *internalization* ("the playing out on domestic territory of conflicts that have their origin externally"), *externalization* (when actors move to the supranational level seeking international institutions to intervene domestically), and *transnational collective action* ("coordinated international campaigns on the part of networks of activists against international actors, other states, or international institutions") (2005: 2-7).

In reference to transnationalism, at a most abstract and generalized level, the texts can be grouped in three broad categories. The first takes an almost purely transnational focus; these texts study *primarily* the international or transnational connections within environmental social movements with little attention to the national or subnational character and variation of the movements. Agyeman et. al. (2003), Blowers (2003), Bryner (2001), Caldwell (1992), Derbin and Welch (2002), Eder (2001), Faber and McCarthy (2003), McLaren (2003), Rees and Westra (2003), Scholte and Schnabel (2002), and Wright (2003) are specific examples of this trend. The second group takes an almost purely national focus: environmental social movements are studied nearly entirely within the national or subnational context with little comment on international or transnational influences, as if these connections do not exist or are not significant. Examples include Dalton (1994), Pickvance (1998), and Szasz (1994). Finally, the last group of texts acknowledges both the national and transnational elements of environmental social movements; they recognize a complex balance or interaction between various levels of governance, subnational, national, and transnational, and thus refuse to define environmental social movements as fully transnational or national. Often in this group authors will cite the national rootedness of environmental social movements, but will also stress the major influences, framings, or targets that are inherently transnational. In this group I would place Bandy and Smith (2005), Eder and Kousis (2001), Faber (2005), Imig and Tarrow (2001), Rootes (2003, 2005), Rucht (2001), and Ruzza (2001).

Of course, there is also an identifiable chronological trend in the literature's categorization: the earlier works (mid- to late-1990s) exhibit more of a state-based, national focus, whereas the perspective of current texts (since 2000) is more so that environmentalism is unthinkable without a global or transnational emphasis. (There are, of course, exceptions to this trend. For instance, Caldwell's 1992 book chapter is an early, forceful claim that environmental social movements are fundamentally transnational.)

I.i. The Environmental Social Movement Reality is Transnational

Many of the texts studied, particularly those in the second group, offer evidence that the environmental social movement reality is an international or transnational one. Many agree with Bryner who writes, “There is no question that environmentalism is a social movement throughout the world” (xxiii-xxiv). Within the literature several key points establish environmental social movements’ transnationality.

Most generally, observers agree environmental social movements are significantly present and growing on a transnational scale. For instance, Durbin and Welch track environmental nongovernmental organizations and their international presence that has “multiplied and strengthened in the last twenty years” (215). Then Bandy and Smith show environmental social movement organizations to be the largest (and growing!) transnational social movement organizations in number, next to human rights movements. State-based movements attempt, they assert, to become transnational (6, 231). Rootes would go farther: he acknowledges that many environmental social movement groups have been, since their inception, “always transnational in inspiration and aspiration” (2005: 29).

These growing environmental social movements are taking precise action on a transnational scale. Examples include building international coalitions to pressure national governments into environmental action and organizing international conferences to raise awareness (Caldwell: 72-73). As well, environmental nongovernmental organizations or environmental social movements spread transnationally, such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth which started in North America and set up shop in Europe; they join non-local direct activists with local “not-in-my-backyarders” (NYMBYs). Transnational communication also enables the spreading of common tactics and discursive framings (Rootes 2003: 2, 7, 252). For instance Pickvance remarks, “western environmental ideas” were “influential” in her case countries, Hungary and Russia: “green ideas” spread from Western to Eastern Europe (73-74). The rise of civil society environmental protest against global finance is one prominent example of these forms of transnational environmental social movements’ contentious politics in action. Scholte and Schnabel and Durbin and Welch in particular examine the successful pressure transnational environmental social movements put on international financial institutions for transparency, accountability, and environmentally sustainable practices.³

Based on this action, Durbin and Welch assert environmental nongovernmental organizations and environmental social movements “have clearly become more influential players in global finance” and can boast of tangible successes including the addition of an environmental department at the World Bank and stalled World Bank projects (221-22). Some observers agree a common environmental movement is developing, one that, in Dryzek’s words, is part of the “transnational public spheres” confronting international institutions like the EU and international legal instruments like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (197).

³ Durbin and Welch track the details of this action: for instance, transnational environmental social movements organize transnational campaigns to publicize international institutions’ project effects (such as the World Bank’s dam projects), lobby national governments for environmental reform of these international financial institutions, create alternative policies to current economic models or solutions to problems (such as “debt-for nature swaps”), and hold parallel events to share learning on global finance.

Nation State as Weakened. As these environmental social movements become transnational, several authors argue the nation state is losing importance or centrality. Why? In Europe, Eder observes how actors are

forced into loyal alliances with emerging transnational European institutions – alliances which at the same time reduce the strong link between the nation and the people. Europe seems to open a new space for the self-organization of people by providing a space beyond the nation (49).

Similarly, Eder and Kousis note that participation in politics at the European level “has reduced participation in national policy.” Such authors see a power shift from the state to the “supra-nation state” which is engaged by local actors who skip over the nation (9, 13, 401). Scholte and Schnabel extend this logic to a global scale. For them, growing global relationships challenge traditional control of “territorial states” and bring a new “world realm” beyond the state (3). In contrast to these views, Imig and Tarrow take a less extreme position on the state: they predict not the *demise* of states, but their reinvention as “pivots” or brokers between “domestic collective actors who cannot reach the European level and European officials with no direct ties to European citizens” (19, 47).

L.ii. Opportunities for Environmental Social Movement Transnationalism

Whether or not authors agree that environmental social movements are transnational, much of the consulted literature acknowledges *opportunities* or resources for environmental social movement transnationality. In general, a great deal of environmental action seems to have taken the international stage, building a foundation for transnational environmental social movements. Bryner emphasizes this best with his list of the many international environmental summits, institutions, agreements, laws, government, and NGO organizations, trade agreements with environmental clauses, and so forth (105-06). But let me clarify and add to his list using this literature.

To begin, worsening transnational environmental risks, or shared environmental circumstances, provide a fundamental opportunity for the development of transnational environmental social movements. The texts frequently include a long list of environmental risks that defy state borders and therefore may require action at a level beyond the state.⁴ But beyond this point, there is also the common global experience of environmental inequality between and within nations: the experience of environmental injustice may be a common point of solidarity on which to build transnational environmental social movements.⁵

Primary opportunities for transnationalism also include international institutions which lend transnational legitimacy to environmental social movements (while, in turn, communicating with environmental social movements lends legitimacy to these

⁴ See, for instance, Rees and Westra (108) and Caldwell (63).

⁵ For instance Wright examines the similarities of oil industry experiences in Louisiana and Nigeria, and notes how “Environmental degradation and exploitation are transported globally by transnational corporations.” The plight of many nations and communities are thus connected (136). See also McLaren (34) and Rees and Westra (111-12).

institutions), serve as common transnational targets, provide a point of access to environmental policy beyond the state and, in some cases, give resources to build a more transnational environmental social movement. Two institutions are particularly noteworthy in the literature surveyed, the EU and the United Nations.⁶

With regard to the former, Rootes provides a useful analogy: he describes the European community as an “environmental beacon” that can provide environmental social movements with the information and authority to challenge nation states (he gives the example of Friends of the Earth using European institutions to embarrass the UK government and to seek redress) (2003: 14). Further, as the EU is recognized as surpassing national governments in influence on environmental issues (Rucht 128, 135), Europeans begin to recognize the EU as a *target* for claims.⁷ By participating in the EU-created European Environmental Bureau (EEB), environmental groups gain some representation in this body, an institution that is becoming “a powerful source of environmental knowledge and laws” (Ruzza: 105). For some commentators, the EU, therefore, has created a new Europe that has “made the field of environmental politics a unified field of action” (Eder 47).⁸

Second, the UN is another international institution of environmental significance in this literature. Observers repeatedly note how the UN has served as a catalyst for transnationalism, in particular through the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, which raised international awareness and gave legitimacy to budding transnational environmental social movements (Dalton 37-38, Caldwell 65-66). Likewise, Bryner explains how the United Nations Environment Programme helps “create networks that transfer technical and managerial expertise, information, and funds” to support a broad environmental social movement (111).

States’ relationships with environmental social movements also shape opportunities for transnational environmental social movements. For instance Dryzek explains how national social movement actors “redirect” their activity to Europe if access to the state is severed. He gives the British case under Thatcher as an example, as does Rootes: if the state is unresponsive, in some cases social movement actors move to a higher level of authority, if one is available as the EU was in the British case (Rootes 2005: 25, Dryzek 52-53).⁹

Another opportunity for transnational environmental social movements comes from discourse convergence or the development of a common framing of environmental politics. One major concept is that of environmental justice (Faber and McCarthy assert the environmental justice movement is at the “forefront” in the creation of a “new active environmental citizenship”), which encourages a broader understanding of environmental issues by emphasizing interconnections between environmental problems and other issues, and therefore permits coalitions among diverse groups (overcoming divides of class, race, sex, and so forth) (Faber and McCarthy 56-59). Ecological debt is a related concept to serve as, according to McLaren, “a foundation for global campaigns which can unite poor and excluded communities in North and South”: it is a concept providing an

⁶ To this list we could add, as Faber and McCarthy do, international financial institutions such as the World Trade Organization and the World Bank, or multi-national corporations (57).

⁷ See, for instance, Imig and Tarrow (237) and Eder and Kousis (400).

⁸ See also Eder and Kousis (9).

⁹ This process of activists skipping over an unresponsive state is also evident in Keck and Sikkink.

analysis of common problems, obstacles and solutions (32-34). A second major concept to solidify transnational environmental social movements is the (ambiguous) notion of sustainability. Agyeman et. al. show how sustainability has a fundamentally global character: “a sustainable society must also be an equitable society, locally, nationally, and internationally, both within and between generations and between species.” In fact the concept originated from the UN’s 1972 Stockholm conference on the environment and has since been transferred into other international agreements and treaties (5, 323).¹⁰

Finally, transnational environmental social movements may find a common global audience as well. Dalton, for example, describes a converging public opinion, at least in Europe: people generally share a concern about the environment and are supportive of the environmental movement. There has been a “greening of European public opinion,” as well as of “consumer and electoral behavior” (55-59, 71) on which transnational environmental social movements may be based.

There are, however, strong criticisms of the two points advanced in the sections above. While many authors accept the reality of certain aspects of transnationality in environmental social movements, as well as the presence of opportunities for more of this transnationality, some are more hesitant to proclaim the complete arrival of transnational environmental social movements.

Imig and Tarrow make this point most plainly. They write that opportunities for transnationalism exist *in theory*; on first consideration we would expect to see transnational mobilization in Western Europe to match the economic and political integration in that region. They therefore begin their work with the hypothesis that European contention would surface to match the European polity: “If Europe is becoming a polity, we hypothesize, sooner or later ordinary citizens will turn their claims and their forms of contentious politics beyond their borders and toward this new level of governance” (7). Yet evidence from Imig and Tarrow’s research, as well as from that of other observers, complicates the notion of transnational environmental social movements. To contrast the above sections, there is reason to assert that environmental social movements are actually *nationally rooted*, and facing *significant barriers* to transnationalism.

I.iii. The Environmental Social Movement Reality is National

I will begin with Imig and Tarrow’s contributions to the question of transnationality. While these commentators do agree with authors noted above that grievances are now being targeted at supranational levels, they explain that much of the contention in Europe is still located domestically. They found “Europeans are increasingly protesting against European Union policies—*but on domestic soil and not directly against the institutions that produce them*” (original italics, 3).¹¹ (Their study categorizes 95% of recent European protest as domesticated, rather than transnational.) Contention is not drawn solely to the European level instead the contention is happening at the subnational, national, and supranational levels among a variety of actors intersecting with each other

¹⁰ Also see Eder and Kousis (13-14).

¹¹ See also pages 18, 33, 48, and 235.

in a variety of combinations. The “alliances” are unclear, the ideal choice of access point is open for debate, and responsibility for decisions is not necessarily housed in one location (16).

National Variation. Indeed, a great portion of the texts in my literature survey are concerned with showing variation in states’ environmental social movements, which are nationally or locally focused, rather than some form of convergence of global environmental contention across states.

Rootes’ analysis is an excellent case in point. (Dryzek and Dalton also provide a convincing analysis of environmental social movement variation by country, finding similar points of difference for their cases.) Rootes compares the level of institutionalization of Social movement organizations cross-nationally (using the country cases of France, Britain, Germany, Italy, Spain, Greece, Sweden and Basque Country), and finds great variation due to general political culture or historical “political opportunity structures.” The path of protest in each country is affected by nongeneralizable “idiosyncratic mixes of political institutional, cultural, contextual, and contingent factors” (2003: 234-35). Thus, as Rootes’ research demonstrates, nations exhibit variation on several key points: *the issues*,¹² *organization*,¹³ and level of focus, *localism or nationalism*¹⁴ (2003: 8, 239-49).

Rootes therefore shows how environmental protest is not converging across countries, even as the EU consolidates. Protests studied were not mobilized on the European level, issues were not European in scope, and targets were not European-level actors. Instead, protests focused on the national or subnational issues and actors; there is no trans-Europeanization of mobilization, complaints, or targets.¹⁵ Instead, as Eder and Kousis state, environmental policy making in Europe may be creating “cleavages” among states, especially between the North and South, rather than leading to convergence; the EU may not be making a homogenous Europe, but *transforming* the old divides (4-5).

Nation State Retains Prominence. Thus instead of the state vanishing or decreasing in importance, many authors affirm the state retains an essential role for the state, even to the point of positing state structure as a key variable affecting the character of

¹² Examples of variation on issues include the contrast between Germany’s nuclear focus, Spain’s water concerns, Britain, France, and Sweden’s construction or road building fears, Britain, Sweden, and Italy’s animal rights focus, and Italy, Greece and Spain’s concern for urban, pollution and health. (For a similar discussion of country variation on issues of concern, see Eder and Kousis 5-6.)

¹³ Variation is noted here because some countries specialize in more formal, institutionalized non-protest EMOs, while others specialize in more informal, ad hoc local protest coalitions. As well, some national networks are noted as highly centralized and others as quite independent or decentralized. Finally, some boast significant links to other institutions, such as political parties, unions, and churches, whereas other EMOs have not developed these links.

¹⁴ Rootes’ protest event analysis reveals an interesting cross-national variation in the level at which protest is organized and directed: he notes that half of the protest in Germany and Britain is mobilized at the local or regional level, but with national targets, while in Sweden, half of the mobilization occurred at the local or regional level, but two-thirds of these targeted the national level. Different again, in Greece as much as ninety percent of protests were “local mobilizations around local issues” but half of these had national targets.

¹⁵ In fact, he notes little mention in protests of the EU (institutions of the EU are hardly mentioned), other EU states, or corporations in other EU states (2003: 250).

environmental social movements. For Dryzek, for instance, the environmental movements within states rely on and stay closely linked with the state (based on familiar access to funding, information and other resources), and reflect to a certain degree the type of state they confront (exclusive or inclusive, passive or active) (6-9, 21).¹⁶ With transnational changes, many of which were noted above, the state may lose dominance, but not importance. National states will continue to provide “a large part of the structural context” for public interaction and play an important part in “greening” society (198).

I.iv. Barriers to Environmental Social Movement Transnationalism

This continued national focus of environmental social movements might be explained by the impediments environmental social movements face in shifting from the national to the transnational level. There are plenty of opportunities for transnationalism, as noted earlier, but mobilization remains domestic due to equally significant barriers to transnationalism. This following discussion can serve, therefore, as a warning against the assumption that “scale shifting up” is either easy or inevitable.

A most frequently cited barrier is the difficulty in overcoming fragmentation in order to create a unified, transnational movement with “coordinated and comprehensive policy solutions” (Bryner 113). Enduring sources of conflict stem from differences in wealth and power among actors (for instance between the North and South), national and sectoral interests, language and culture, political histories and local political contexts, organizational forms (such as differences in representation, decision making, division of labour, and leadership forms), goals and strategic interests (radical versus reformist, violent versus peaceful, legal versus illegal), ideology, religion, gender, ethnicity, and class. In general, a transnational social movement needs some commonality as a basis for solidarity, yet there are many divisions obstructing this commonality.¹⁷

Many texts also cited the lack of infrastructure to support transnational environmental social movements. Bryner suggests, for instance, such movements would require an “overarching body” keeping environmental issues at the centre of policy making at the international level, perhaps one on par with the WTO (135-36).¹⁸ This infrastructure would support long term transnational communication and provide a point of commonality that would, for instance, “routinize communications and resource flows” and create rules for decision making, thus overcoming some of the fragmentation noted above (Bandy and Smith 5).

Another related practical obstacle to transnational environmental social movements is a lack of transnational resources. Authors frequently refer to what Imig and Tarrow describe as “significant transaction costs of transnational mobilization” (35): to act transnationally groups often need more time, money (for travel and communication, as well as to build a transnational presence and capacity through, for

¹⁶ Pickvance also notes the effect of state openness on environmental movements (215-16, 225).

¹⁷ Of course, this dearth of commonality may also be explained by the lack of global or transnational citizenship. For instance, in the case of Europe, Rucht (138-39), Rootes (2003: 250), and Eder and Kousis (10) all agree there is no real European citizen or identity.

¹⁸ Similarly, Dryzek suggests, “The ease with which the idea and actuality of the public sphere can be applied to the transnational level contrasts with the difficulty entailed in creating institutional analogues to the state in the international system, the EU experience notwithstanding” (197).

instance, transnational meetings), staff, expertise and information (for instance to deal with less familiar and potentially more complex institutions), as well as better organization.¹⁹ The resources that exist, as Rucht observes, are often concentrated at the national level where “rank and file” actors, who are focused on national or subnational issues, are reluctant to transfer resources to a supranational level (138).

Environmental social movements are also pulled away from supranational action *toward* national or local action by their members, to whom they are accountable for legitimacy and revenue. Often these local members may be more focused on local environmental issues than transnational ones.²⁰

Similarly, transnationalism may be impeded by the advantages environmental social movements find in staying at the national level, and this happens for several convincing reasons. Simply put in Rootes’ terms, “there is as yet no global polity comparable to the nation-state” (2005: 22). First, at a basic level, the nation state is a familiar level at which to operate for environmental social movements, as opposed to the uncertainty and complexity of intergovernmental negotiations. National environmental social movement activity is a more familiar routine. Second, the state remains a powerful centre of authority (as previously noted), even with elements of environmental transnationalism. For instance in the case of the EU, although this international body has become in many ways a centre of environmental planning, it is at the national level that these policies are implemented. In any case, national governments retain a degree of power within the EU (Rootes 2003: 14, Rucht 135). Third, nation states may offer environmental social movements something international institutions do not: *access*. Imig and Tarrow ask: where do citizens bring their claims or grievances? To those “directly responsible for their grievances”? No, they respond, not if those agents are “distant, indirect, and often obscure”; instead, grievances are made where social movement actors have “visible political opportunities” and can hope to achieve “maximum influence” (17-20). International institutions like the EU may be perceived as inaccessible, complex bureaucracies too rigid to change (Eder and Kousis 5, Rucht 138). Thus environmental social movements may take an indirect route through national or subnational levels to reach the transnational level, as long as the nation state is somewhat open and responding to environmental social movements (Rootes 2005: 33, 42). (Of course, as noted in reference to the British case above, the state is not always receptive to environmental social movements: repressive, closed, or otherwise unsupportive national governments can also be *barriers* that encourage environmental social movement actors to “skip” the state and move to a transnational level (Bandy and Smith 235, Pickvance 144, 215-16, 225).)

¹⁹ See, for instance, Bandy and Smith (235).

²⁰ On this point see, for instance, Imig and Tarrow (38-39) and Rootes (2003: 7-8, 2005: 25, 37). As Rootes notes, this national versus transnational tension may exist within the member community: Social movement organizations “need to pay sufficient attention to domestic issues to persuade local supporters of their practical relevance; on the other hand, they must satisfy other supporters’ concerns with the transnational” (2005: 39).

I.v. Literature's Conclusions?

In summary, what does this literature indicate? environmental social movements are growing throughout many countries of the world, they do have an important international presence, they act internationally in various ways with some success. Likewise, problems and solutions are frequently framed in transnational terms: environmental social movements often understand the issues as transnational ones requiring some degree of transnational cooperation. International institutions are both targeted with claims and approached for support. Common experiences, opinions, and discourses may also serve as a basis for cross-border solidarity.

Nonetheless, even in light of these significant elements of transnationality, environmental social movements remain nationally rooted. There is much evidence that contention happens domestically, even if it is directed toward institutions defying national borders. Further, rather than convergence in contention, there is noteworthy national variation. Obstacles to transnationality are considerable, including movement fragmentation and the lack of infrastructure and resources. At the same time, environmental social movements are pulled back from transnationality by locally oriented members.

Although there is not enough evidence to classify precisely the environmental social movements of this literature according to della Porta and Tarrow's types of transnationality, I can make tentative suggestions. There is evidence of diffusion exhibited by environmental social movements studied in these texts. Ideas, strategies, and frames, for instance, have spread across national borders without concomitant dense relationships. As well, there is evidence of domestication or internalization, for example, when environmental social movements react to EU policies domestically. However it is more questionable if the environmental social movements exhibit externalization or transnational collective action. Many of the texts in the second group, the transnationally focused, would argue these two forms of transnationality are present, however the data presented in many of the texts in the first and second groups convincingly demonstrate a more complex reality: environmental social movements may indirectly target international institutions and may use transnational framing and discourse, however they are predominantly nationally bound. As well, the many noted barriers to transnationalism reveal the difficulties in coordinating truly transnational campaigns. The literature indicates that we are currently living a time of transnationalism, perhaps even one of a transnational movement society, but it is of a particular *type* of transnationalism, one that may not be as revolutionary as sometimes claimed.

Even where transnationalism exists, the literature suggests it is hardly the *only* form of environmental social movement. Perhaps a more accurate understanding of environmental social movements is not one of fully national or fully transnational environmental social movements, but of a strategic division of labour that includes both types of movement. Rucht and Rootes are helpful on this point: Rucht notes, for example, the division of labour in European environmental politics, with environmental groups playing along within the institutions in Brussels while a "radical flank" uses direct action within states (137). Likewise, Rootes suggests that environmental groups lobbying in Brussels may be made moderate by the encouragement of EU funding, but this does not silence nationally based environmental movement organizations which

coordinate national protest. As environmental social movements are institutionalized transnationally, more radical national or local movements appear (2003: 2, 5, 13-15). Many levels or niches are filled by environmental social movements; a purely national or transnational perspective alone will not capture this complexity.

II. Case Analysis

The above literature review focuses predominantly on Europe. Now below, I attempt to compare these findings to a new set of cases, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, by examining major national, multi-issue environmental organizations. These three countries have long been identified as a distinct sub-section of a coherent cluster of “settler” societies.

An initial landmark in the study of settler society clusters was Hartz’s *The Founding of New Societies* which made broad comparisons across the “fragments” of Europe, including case studies of the United States, Latin America, South Africa, Canada, and Australia (1964). This text initiated a body of comparative studies on European-descent societies that remained popular until the mid-1970s.

More recently, the topic has been reframed and revived. For example, in 1995, Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis returned to settler societies in a critical and dynamic analysis emphasizing dichotomies of gender, race, ethnicity, and class. Expanding the cluster to include Algeria, Canada, Mexico, New Zealand, Palestine/Israel, Peru, South Africa, United States, and Zimbabwe, the contributors criticized the static and restricted notions of previous debates on settler societies, especially the narrow focus on only white, male, British migrant history in the nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, and assumptions of unified, uniform, classless “settler” experience.

An immediate and determined attempt to revitalize the topic is the International Congress of Historical Sciences’ commitment to the topic. The organization is hosting two conferences on the theme “Settler Economies in World History” (this summer in Sydney, Australia, and next summer in Helsinki, Finland) with the aim to produce an edited volume on the subject.

How did (or does) this literature unify settler societies in a common cluster? Most obviously, these societies are defined as those that saw a significant settlement of people from Europe, as opposed to a small exploitative class. These migrants often moved from land scarce, modern states to the less organized – and more land abundant – “settler” regions where they frequently clashed with indigenous peoples. Eventually, the settlers would dominate the indigenous people with their imported European culture, ideology, political and legal institutions, and economic ties. Although the settler societies would eventually gain political independence from Europe, market dependence and ties would remain, as would the desire to rebuild elements of the homeland in vastly different geographies. Also, while settler societies would generally go on to “relative prosperity, high material standards and liberal democratic governments” (Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis, 1995: 4), in attempting to develop a coherent nation state most settler states would be challenged by their great social cleavages. The settler societies share, therefore, significant demographic, historical, cultural, political, ideological, and economic experiences.

Of this group, Australia, Canada, and, New Zealand are considered the Anglo “white dominions” where “dominant culture and institutions were fashioned directly on those of the ‘mother’ country (Britain)” (Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis, 1995: 3-4). And it is here that Dunlap in his 1999 *Nature and the English Diaspora* adds specific environmental commonalities across settler societies crucial to my work. My current focus is, in many ways, a humble nod to Dunlap.²¹

Dunlap demonstrates how settlers in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand approached their new environments with a similar vision: these lands were interpreted as infinite, abundant wildernesses – free for the taking – to be conquered and exploited, tamed and remade in England’s image. In particular, Dunlap traces similarities in farm, ranch, and town development, in animal, bird, and plant importation, in sport hunting, and in the near or full extermination of indigenous people, plants, and animals. Alongside aims to build new Englands, settlers were also driven by more explicit economic motives: lands were exploited and valuable resources taken back to the English market.

However Dunlap shows how this settler will to conquer and exploit eventually transformed into a celebration of difference and pride the new lands’ uniqueness, compared to the old world, although often this change had to wait for the passing of generations and for significant environmental degradation, the point at which these local environments were gravely threatened. The conservation efforts developing from the 1880s onward were similar across these settler countries, as they had been informed by a shared group of experts and scientific ideologies. There were also in response to common problems, such as industrial development and technology.

Dunlap does not ignore significant differences in lands and climate settled, settlement timing, population distribution, and even geographical status (with one country a continent, one a part of the North American continent, and the last two small islands). Indeed, some ideas, Dunlap notes, “met different fates in different lands” (14). And yet, these significant differences notwithstanding, he convincingly demonstrates that there were important commonalities shaping the human-nature relationship in these societies. But does he lead us to believe as well these similarities will reverberate through to our time, our environmental futures? Are his reflections meaningful now?

Dunlap does in fact extend his work to contemporary environmental questions shared by his settler cases, again stressing commonality. He interprets environmentalism as “the last, or latest chapter in the settlers’ search for a place in the land and its place in them” (274). He examines how “environmentalism was, even more than earlier responses to nature, a common Anglo movement” (275) (although differences are notable due to political structures, particularly decentralized versus centralized governments). He also notes a common judicial problem: Anglo law has difficulty dealing with collective interests, “the diffuse rights of many people,” in particular, generalized environmental interests (298).

Questions facing the current environmental movements in these countries similarly surround the problem of how to develop “ecologically sound local economies” that will still allow people to live within these lands, with real ties to the lands (309). In these countries, in Dunlap’s eloquent words, “We all, still, face a common situation,

²¹ However at this time I could not include Dunlap’s fourth case, the US, in my work, although I do intend to consider this case in future research.

seeking a place in lands now littered with the wrecks of earlier generations' hopes and dreams." We in the "white dominions" are still trying to figure out how to belong to these places (316).

I base my case selection on these forty years of intellectual meandering on the general subject of settler societies and Dunlap's recent specific contribution on "white dominion" settler societies and environmentalism. This choice amounts to a preliminary step in dissertation building, a test to see if this case selection is a valid one. I keep in mind a couple of challenges to this selection in mind: Do these cases form a unified, exclusive whole? Are boundaries clear between settler and nonsettler states? Does historical commonality matter today? Or simply, does history matter? These are questions I must address in future methodological considerations.

But for the moment, within these three cases I chose to focus on a narrow range of major national, multi-issue, broad based, environmental groups in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. I made my selections based on groups noted in the environmental politics literature, but more so through conversations with activists in the field from each country. Most agree I have included the most significant national groups.

Why choose these larger national organizations? Based on the literature discussed above, a main obstruction to transnational work is resource paucity, therefore, as I am specifically seeking the developing patterns of transnational environmental activism, I needed to consider the groups most likely capable of this type of action, the larger national organizations. Indeed, as I elaborate below, even these organizations are dominantly nationally focussed with only some rare instances of transnational work.²² (In organizations at the regional or local level this is even more extreme, with such organizations *completely* focussed on local issues.)

The selected groups, by country (and with acronyms for use in the rest of this paper), are as follows:

²² As a brief background to these cases, what are the primary *national* concerns of these organizations? In Australia, the environmental organizations battle climate change, overtapped and polluted freshwater systems, ocean degradation (including a threatened Great Barrier Reef and the problem of over fishing), forest clear cutting (with major campaigns currently underway against industrial forestry practice in Tasmania), invasive species, nuclear power and uranium mining, and, running through all these is the general problem of massive extinction and threatened natural areas (particularly in the less-developed north). In Canada, key national issues include preventing further neglectful development practices (especially unsustainable mining, fishing, forestry, and water use), addressing climate change (clarifying and enforcing Kyoto commitments), protecting biodiversity (particularly forest, marine, and Arctic), and preventing and cleaning up pollution (air and water, for instance from pesticide use). Finally, similar to the Australian case, New Zealand environmental organizations focus nationally on oceans (over fishing, whaling, and threatened species like the Hector's and Maui's Dolphin and albatross), upholding New Zealand's nuclear free status, climate change, unsustainable forest imports (and ensuring national logging practices are certifiably sustainable), invasive species, and working for better industrial development standards (limiting air and water pollution, soil degradation, mining, forest clearing, wetland drainage).

Australia		Canada		New Zealand	
Australian Conservation Foundation	ACF-AU	David Suzuki Foundation	DSF-CA	Greenpeace Aotearoa New Zealand	G-NZ
Greenpeace Australia Pacific	G-AU	Friends of the Earth Canada	FOE-CA	Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society of New Zealand	RFB-NZ
The Wilderness Society	TWS-AU	Greenpeace Canada	G-CA	World Wildlife Fund New Zealand	WWF-NZ
World Wildlife Fund Australia	WWF-AU	Sierra Club of Canada	SC-CA	Environment and Conservation Organizations of Aotearoa New Zealand	ECO-NZ
		World Wildlife Fund Canada	WWF-CA		

In analyzing these groups' transnational activism I surveyed academic writing available on these groups or on the environmental movements in which they engage, as well as material available from the groups (often online through their websites). I supplemented this with conversations over email and, to date, five more detailed interviews.²³ (I requested interviews from all groups, however, few could participate at

²³ I owe thanks to the many people who generously helped me understand environmental activism in their respective countries. From Australia I thank Pauline Byron, Executive Assistant, Earthwatch Institute, Hayley Delicata, Corporate Affairs Coordinator, Clean Up Australia, Timothy Doyle, University of Adelaide, Laraine Frawley, Office Manager, Conservation Council of the SE Region and Canberra, Chris Harris, Earthshare, Emilie Jaye, Goongerah Environment Centre, Michael Kerr, formerly of the Australian Conservation Foundation (now a consultant with Natural Advantage in Montréal), Ron Newton, Supporter Relations Manager, WWF-Australia, Mark Parnell, Solicitor, Environmental Defenders Office, (South Australia), Julie Schilin, Australian Conservation Foundation, Jeff Smith, Director, Environmental Defender's Office, Cam Walker, Friends of the Earth Australia, and Patty Zenonos, Office Coordinator, Australian Marine Conservation Society.

From Canada I thank Maya Ahmad, Donor Services Manager, World Wildlife Fund Canada, Crystal Childs, Campaigns and Executive Assistant, IFAW Canada, Andrew Dumbrille, Communications Coordinator, Sierra Club of Canada, David Dodge, Director of Communications, Pembina Institute, Sara Ehrhardt, National Water Campaigner, Council of Canadians, Kevin Gamble, Member Services, Greenpeace Canada, Julia Langer, International Conservation Program Director, World Wildlife Fund

this time due to time constraints.) In surveying this material I collected any indications of transnational orientations, which span from ideological commitments (for instance, global framing of problems in mission statements) to significant “on-the-ground” action. Therefore, (mapping on to Tarrow and della Porta’s 2005 typology), I include a range of “transnationalism” from what groups are *doing* to how they are *interpreting* their environmental situation. The groups can be divided between two categories: first, those with very infrequent transnational action, but transnational interpretations of environmental problems and solutions, and second, those demonstrating significant transnational environmental action.²⁴ (Of course, I should emphasize here that categorizing these groups in either category is not a criticism, rather it is an observation of perhaps the division of labour among environmental groups.)

II.i. Rare Transnational Action, But Some Transnational Interpretations

Several groups are what we might call “homegrown” environmental organizations emphasizing only national issues and actions. Key examples are RFB-NZ, DSF-CA, SC-CA, and WWF-NZ.

RFB-NZ is perhaps the most adamantly national with a clear nationally based mission “to preserve and protect the native plants and animals and natural features of New Zealand.” Beyond vague mention of South Pacific rainforests and Antarctica, there is no discussion of places or connections beyond New Zealand. Instead, RFB-NZ centres on issues such as protecting local fish and birds (protecting the albatross is a current major campaign) and their habitats (for example, mangroves), controlling invasive species, and lobbying for national resource management (focussing on air and water pollution and unrestrained industrial development, such as mining and clear cutting) (Royal, 2005).

DSF-CA is equally nationally focused in action, but it does interpret environmental problems and solutions as transnational ones. DSF-CA is, at its most general, concerned with “life on earth” and it interprets nature as a home for all humanity. The problems it addresses are indeed global (for instance, climate change), and the solutions DSF-CA offers could be widely applicable, but the organization’s *action* is completely concentrated on Canada. For example, the group lobbies federal and provincial governments for fuel economy standards in vehicles; provides local communities with resources to fight city sprawl; and encourages Canadian industry to use

Canada, Irene Novaczek, Director of the Institute of Island Studies, University of PEI, and Toni Pieroni, The David Suzuki Foundation.

Finally, from New Zealand I thank Shelly Biswell, NZAEE, Helen Campbell, Nelson Environment Centre, Margaret Crozier, Executive Director, Greenpeace NZ / Aotearoa, Emma Green, Executive Officer, Environmental Defence Society, Christopher Howe, Conservation Director, WWF New Zealand, Bonnie Schaab, Environment Officer 2005, Lincoln University Students Association, Bob Tait, co-director, Friends of the Earth New Zealand, Sara Walton, University of Otago’s Department of Management, and Nick Young, web manager, Greenpeace Aotearoa New Zealand. Special thanks also go to Clive Monds, ECO executive member, for his detailed comments on New Zealand environmentalism (Monds, 2005).

²⁴ Note that I have difficulty placing G-CA and G-NZ at this time. I require more information to clarify their transnational activities and am awaiting interviews.

new technologies to cut emissions and lower production costs. Likewise, while recognizing forests as the “lungs of the earth,” the DSF-CA focuses on developing sustainable practices in Canada’s temperate rainforests (in BC) and northern boreal forests. This pattern of recognizing a global problem, but focusing on national solutions is a trend for DSF-CA.²⁵

Similarly, all campaigns of SC-CA consider environmental issues globally, but all efforts (as many as forty specific campaigns) are concentrated at the regional or national levels. (Note that SC-CA’s “International Program” announced to aim for “global sustainable development” is currently dormant and may soon be removed from the website.) Here again the example of addressing climate change is informative: SC-CA acknowledges climate change as a global problem and it does look to other nations for examples of creative solutions, however, few tangible links are made with groups outside Canada and action remains focused on lobbying federal politicians for, as an example, regulated car emissions. Yet the effect of such national efforts are expected to have real international consequences, for instance regulated car emissions could influence American automobile production therefore “tipping the scales” toward greener car production.²⁶

WWF-NZ then serves as an example of della Porta and Tarrow’s domestication / internalization. WWF-NZ is concerned with the global problems of over fishing and deep sea trawling, and aims for international fishing agreements and high seas marine protected areas. Yet how they attempt to fulfill these goals is purely national: WWF-NZ lobbies the New Zealand government, providing it with research and positions to act more environmentally in the international sphere.²⁷

II.ii. Significant Transnational Action

While prominent, the latter group of organizations demonstrating rare transnational action, but frequent transnationalism interpretation is in the minority for most environmental organizations in my selection are beginning to engage tangibly with environmental issues transnationally. In particular, in this next group I would include the transnational work of WWF-AU, TWS-AU, G-AU, ACF-AU, FOE-CA, and WWF-CA. Below I give several concrete examples of what exactly these groups are doing beyond their country borders.

To begin, the Australian groups are leaders on this point, with every organization studied having a significant transitional strategy. For example, WWF-AU, G-AU, and ACF-AU all work in various areas of the South Pacific to protect forests. In Melanesia WWF-AU works with local communities, governments, and organizations to create sustainable forestry management programs and to develop non-timber forest products. The group was also successful in lobbying governments to manage collaboratively

²⁵ Links to these subjects are found through the David Suzuki Foundation homepage, <http://www.davidsuzuki.org/>.

²⁶ Andrew Dumbille, SC-CA’s Communications Coordinator, provided these examples and clarified the point on SC-CA’s transnational interpretations and ultimate aims, but national action (telephone interview, May 12, 2005).

²⁷ Chris Howe, WWF-NZ’s Conservation Director, explained this process (telephone interview, May 19, 2005). See also World Wildlife Fund New Zealand, *Conservation: Introduction*.

approximately three million hectares of tropical wetlands in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and Australia through the Tri Nations Wetlands Initiative (World Wildlife Fund Australia, 2004). Similar to WWF-AU's work with local communities, ACF-AU focuses on "capacity building" in Papua New Guinea, East Timor, Indonesia, and Solomon Islands: it helps to create and sustain local sustainable development organizations, with an emphasis on sustainable forestry, by forming alliances, sharing knowledge, and providing funds.²⁸ Then G-AU, typical of Greenpeace strategy, takes a more activist role in South Pacific forests: it aims to protect forests and communities in Melanesia by acting as a "watchdog" (patrolling forests and drawing public attention to unsustainable practices). More specifically, G-AU used these techniques with success to lobby the Papua New Guinea government to declare a moratorium on additional logging (Greenpeace, *Ancient Forests in Crisis*).

Transnational activism extends beyond these forestry concerns. For example, G-AU protests whaling in Korea and Japan. Working with Korean environmental NGOs, G-AU created a "whale embassy" and symbolic "whale burial ground" at the planned site of a Korean whale meat factory to draw public attention to the hunt (Greenpeace Australia Pacific). G-AU also lobbies the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission to protect endangered or threatened species, such as the bigeye and yellowfin tuna (for example, the group attends these regional meetings as an observer, reports on the meetings, and submits public petitions).

ACF-AU has a similar international presence, for instance at meetings like the upcoming Eleventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Montréal. However, a more intriguing example of transnational activism by ACF-AU surrounded the recent Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement negotiations. ACF-AU joined with American environmental organizations to ensure the agreement incorporated sustainability issues. Their efforts were successful for the agreement, which came into effect in 2005, is one of the first FTAs with no investor-state dispute mechanism, therefore corporations are prevented from taking legal action against governments that enact environmental legislation threatening corporate investments (Kerr, 2005).

Canadian environmental organizations are not far behind their Australian counterparts on transitional activism. Most tangibly, since 1987 WWF-CA has led WWF International's work in Cuba, work representing as much as 20% of WWF-CA's funding and efforts (two full time staff members work in the Havana field office, plus support staff). WWF-CA partners with other groups in Cuba for both the protection and sustainable use of marine areas. Specific activities in the area include "capacity building (training, equipment), support for infrastructure, education/outreach, [and] legislative/policy reform."²⁹

²⁸ Michael Kerr, formerly a legal advisor and national management team member for ACF-AU, was helpful in explaining the details of these campaigns (telephone interview, May 16, 2005).

²⁹ This description comes from Julia Langer, WWF-CA's International Conservation Program Director (e-mail correspondence, May 18, 2005). Another topic area demonstrating WWF-CA's transnational action is forest and trade, on which the organization takes a continental focus (World Wildlife Fund Canada, *How We Work*).

More recently, FOE-CA branches out into a new level of transnational environmental criticism and activism as it develops an International Program around the idea of global environmental justice. In FOE-CA's words:

Friends of the Earth Canada is in the process of developing an International Program that will seek to challenge destructive practices, promote sustainable solutions, and raise awareness about the importance of global environmental justice. Our work will focus on the impact of Canadian corporations, international institutions, trade bodies and government policy on the global environment and the rights of communities. We are working to build a Canada that respects environmental rights, promotes meaningful international environmental cooperation and takes action to address the country's historic and current role in the global environmental crisis.

FOE-CA plans to focus on ensuring international financial institutions like the World Bank are "held accountable" for their projects, and that these projects respect international environmental conventions and local communities. Also, the group will work to protect governments' rights to enact environmental policies in cases where corporations are challenging governments through free trade agreements. They also plan to "challenge destructive corporate practices and promote corporate accountability," particularly of Canadian corporations working overseas and corporations providing imports to Canada. Canadian overseas mining is key for FOE-CA right now, for instance, the organization protests Canada's Ascendant Copper Corporation's plan to develop an open pit copper mine in Ecuador's Cotacachi-Cayapas Ecological Reserve (Friends of the Earth Canada, *Global Environmental Justice*).³⁰

While these examples are significant and clearly demonstrate transnational environmental activism, we should be careful not to misinterpret these findings. While these groups are engaging substantially in transnational realms, this level of action is certainly not the organizations' focus. Most estimate that approximately ninety percent of their group's focus is on national action, with a remaining ten percent for transnational action. While addressing these national issues, many groups would like expand to more transnational work, however, my interviewees agree they are, as the literature asserts, constrained to the national level by resources. Overall, in daily functioning, the groups make a strategic choice to recognize transnational links and work, ultimately, for global change, but they do so through a more restrained emphasis at the nation state level.

III. Conclusions

Thus in contemporary civil society there is no completely transnational environmental social movement moving fully through della Porta and Tarrow's four types of transnationalism. Instead, building on Tarrow's "rooted cosmopolitans" concept (2005), perhaps we can note the rise of "rooted enviropolitans," literally meaning "citizens of the

³⁰ Here I would also like to thank Graham Saul, FOE-CA's International Program Officer, for his presentations at Cornell University in March 2005 on FOE-CA's and Friends of the Earth International's campaigns.

environment”: the rooted enviropolitans are conscientious of global environmental problems and the solutions they require, which are beyond the control of any one nation; they adopt a global framing of environmental problems; they are cognizant of how their local or national experiences relate to global issues; they may be connected to other environmental actors from other nations, and they may participate in international environmental action. *However*, they are fundamentally rooted in a national setting. Dunlap recognized this as well in his discussions of nationally based environmental movements in his settler societies. Although rooted in scientific understandings of ecological interdependence and “appeal[ing] to the idea of global ecosystems” these movements “necessarily live in some particular place” (1999: 305).

This may at least tentatively confirm arguments that there is no global environmental civil society, but yet there is evidence of growing and significant transnationalism, following specific patterns. First, and most commonly recognized trend, is national environmental organizations’ reach into international politics to lobby international institutions. Examples where this happens mostly through lobbying national governments (thus a weak form of transnationalism) include ECO-NZ’s pressure on the national government to work for international fisheries management and Canadian environmental groups’ generalized criticism of Canada’s vague commitment to the Kyoto Protocol. Some groups, however, demonstrate della Porta and Tarrow’s “externalization” (when groups skip the domestic level and act at the supranational level, often seeking international institutions to intervene domestically). Examples could include TWS-AU’s work with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s World Heritage Committee to protect key areas through their designation as World Heritage Sites and G-AU’s direct lobbying of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

The second and perhaps more dynamic form of transnationalism is national environmental organizations’ reach to work on the ground with less developed nations *in the region*, with their geographic neighbours. WWF-CA’s various efforts to support local marine protection and sustainable development in Cuba and the work of groups like WWF-NZ, WWF-AU, TWS-AU, and ACF-AU to build community capacity in Melanesia for sustainable forestry are representative of this form of partnership.

Perhaps this second type of action is an attempt to respond, finally, to the original tenets of sustainable development: global partnerships and exchange for sustainable development forged between developed and developing countries (see, for instance, the principles of the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development). Brundtland, one of the founders of the sustainable development debate, recently remarked that while her suggestion to “Think Global, Act Local” spread rapidly, and is now trite in the environmental debate, the maxim should not blindside us, for we must also *act* global.³¹

Third, we can also note national environmental organizations’ transnational reach to work on bioregional or ecosystemic issues that transcend national borders. Key examples here include FOE-CA’s commitment to protect bird migration pathways from the Arctic to the Amazon and WWF-CA’s focus on forest trade from a North American perspective, in recognition of shared habitats requiring joint protection. These last two

³¹ This was one of Gro Harlem Brundtland’s points during her talks at Cornell University, where she gave the 2005 Jill and Ken Iscol Distinguished Environmental Lecture on April 28.

forms of transnationalism are perhaps budding examples of della Porta and Tarrow's transnational collective action, or international coordinated campaigns.

Overall, combining these three patterns, perhaps we can understand – or increasingly expect? – environmental activism to take the form of developed-developing ecosystemic partnerships with an eye to international institutions.

These findings raise two thoughts for further consideration. First, I wonder about the connections between transnational environmental activism patterns and flows of trade. This comes to mind in response to ACF-AU's ties with American environmental groups to negotiate a better Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement and FOE-CA's tracking of commodity chains to ensure Canadian corporate environmental sustainability, broadly understood (what is being imported and how Canadian businesses work abroad). Also, there are connections here with Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis' observation that a new internationalization is arising in settler societies, where instead of links to Britain, Australia and New Zealand move toward Pacific Rim ties and Canada moves toward North American ones (6). Is environmentalism so implicated with trade, production, and development issues that environmental contention follows trade ties? In what precise ways are environmentalists directing their attention to corporations and trade pathways (instead of, or in addition to, governments)? Are relationships developed in trade influencing environmental ties? For instance, as Australia increasingly engages with Pacific Rim trade, are environmentalists more apt to orient themselves to likeminded groups in these countries as well?

Also, the debate has me consider connections between materialist arguments and the trend of continued national rootedness alongside some forms of transnationalism. Read through this lens, we could conclude that the immaterial resources, that which move easier and are shared easier, including information, discourse, and ideology, are more apt to transnationality. Such things cross borders easily, they are less easily restrained and monitored, and they transcend space with greater ease. However, the more cumbersome material resources, such as people and technology, remain space-bound, and tied to geographical places. They travel less easily. We can easily *think* and *talk* international, but it is more difficult to *act* there. This material/immaterial difference may be a second path to explore.

Let me close, though, not with thoughts on future research or further extrapolations, but with nagging questions and self-criticism on this work: over the course of this reading and research, as I spoke with environmental activists doing a great deal of the work of environmentalism, lobbying governments and industry, educating communities and individuals, building environmental protection and sustainable development capacity in developing nations, representing the often ignored interests of the environment in international negotiations, physically blocking further environmental degradation, and so forth, I wondered about the value of the above contributions to this “transnational versus national” debate. Put blatantly, how much of these findings are common sense? That environmental actors are constrained to national action, although their thinking is globally oriented, is perhaps obvious to the point of banality. And that the examples of transnational action happen according to ecosystem interdependencies and through

partnerships between developing and developed countries, isn't this what we would expect, knowing nothing of the "literature"?

A final set of troublesome questions: Is this discussion relevant only to academic discussion? Is it a mere distraction from more pressing issues? Are these debates keeping us confined, in defiance of Marx's eleventh Feuerbachian thesis, to only interpreting the world, instead of changing it? If so, environmental activists may remind me of the danger of distanced commentary, for there is so much to be done and we have so very little time.

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