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## Environmental NGOs in an Emerging Global Civil Society

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## 1. Introduction

Environmental issues are among the most prominent when dealing with transnational nongovernmental organizations. More than 1,400 environmental NGOs were officially accredited with the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro 1992, and a total of about 7,000 NGOs took part, in one way or another, in the "Global Forum" organized as a special event for NGOs apart from the UN conference itself (Haas/Levy/Parson 1995: 160; Jasanoff 1997: 579). The most significant development during the last two decades has been the dramatic increase of NGO activities *outside formal international political processes*. Outside international negotiations or the work of international organizations NGOs operate as voices and agents of civil society vis-à-vis governments, state bureaucracies, and transnational corporations as they seek to come to grips with the threats to the human environment at the local, national and global levels. For example, NGOs launched international campaigns against the degradation of environmental goods caused by practices like whale hunting, nuclear testing, or the clearing of tropical timber, and criticized states for their ineffective policies or transnational corporations for environmentally damaging production. It is the notion of environmental NGOs as a societal response to the erosion of democratic participation and accountability in internationalizing political processes that has prompted research to re-focus attention on transnational politics after it had already been an important, but short-lived research topic in the 1970s. ([footnote 1](#))

In addition to the participatory revolution brought about by NGOs outside formal political processes, international politics is also witnessing a change of roles which environmental NGOs play *within formal international political processes*. The post-Rio period has seen a continuous participation of NGOs within political processes of the United Nations system such as the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and of other international organizations including notably the World Bank, or conferences of the parties of a large number of international conventions for the protection of environmental goods. These international conventions increasingly provide for the participation of NGOs in treaty-based decision-making processes (Raustiala 1997: 723).

However, there are still complaints about NGOs' limited access to international bodies. One analyst has recently remarked on NGOs' access to UN bodies dealing with human rights issues that even with respect to UN structures - that is, meetings with state representatives, officials or experts - which are open to NGOs, doors are never opened wide (Dunne 1997: 308). Although such observations may also apply to many political processes in the field of the environment, one should note that access to, and participation in, such political processes differ widely. UNCED has certainly been one of the key events fostering participation of NGOs within the UN-system, and especially the CSD has been praised for its "relative openness" towards NGOs (Conca 1996: 115). [\(footnote 2\)](#) Current research on environmental NGOs focusses primarily (1) on identifying the conditions for the growth of NGOs in the field of environmental politics, (2) on NGOs behavior vis-à-vis states and IGOs, and (3) on their role in international environmental negotiations. [\(footnote 3\)](#) This research seeks to answer the question of how and why NGOs have become seemingly successful players in environmental policymaking. However, it is still an open question how the research on NGOs can be linked with the broader theoretical debate in the discipline of International Relations. Both realism and institutionalism analyze international politics only at the systemic level. Both theories consider states as the main actors in an anarchical international system. [\(footnote 4\)](#) Realists describe international politics as a model of billiard-balls in which states are the only important actors (Waltz 1979). Therefore, the analysis of NGOs in international politics is irrelevant to realism. Institutionalism also rests on a state-centered analysis of international politics (Keohane 1989). The broadening of the system-level analysis of institutionalism by two-level-games remained a metaphor and was not fully implemented by the institutionalist research community. [\(footnote 5\)](#) In contrast with realism and institutionalism, liberal theory deals with the impact of state-society relations in international politics. Although it is mainly a unit-level theory defined by the centrality of individual rights, private property, and representative government (Doyle 1997: 208), liberal theory transcends the analysis of the domestic level by incorporating transnational civil society.

Moravcsik (1997: 516-521) argues that a liberal theory of international politics comprises three core assumptions. *First*, individuals and private actors are the fundamental actors in international politics. Liberal theory analyzes the political process with a bottom-up approach. The self-interested domestic and transnational actors are assumed to act as rational maximizers of material and immaterial welfare. *Second*, liberal theory conceives the state as a representative institution influenced by the activities of domestic actors rather than as an independent actor. These representative institutions act as transmission belts by which the preferences and social power of individuals and groups are translated into state policy (Moravcsik 1997: 518). *Third*, liberal theory presumes that state preferences determine state behavior at the international level. States act as utility-maximizers since they seek to preserve the present welfare of their societies or try to enhance it in the future. Convergent state preferences will lead to coordination or even collaboration between states. By contrast, strong interstate tension or even coercive interaction will be likely when the preferences of different states diverge or are totally incompatible. The (neo)liberal analysis focuses on mixed-motive situations with weak concerns about relative gains. In these mixed-motive situations states face a strong incentive for policy coordination improving the welfare of every participating state as compared to unilateral policy adjustment. Realists concentrate on analyzing mixed-motive situations with strong concerns about relative gains in which states face a weak incentive for policy coordination (Hasenclever/Mayer/Rittberger 1997: 215).

Liberalism considers the interactions of actors at the unit and the systemic levels. Compared with realism and institutionalism, it provides a theoretical framework for analyzing the roles of NGOs in both domestic and international politics. In the following, the paper will address questions about

environmental NGOs and their roles in the evolving global civil society. When dealing with these research topics we will also explore how the explanations offered by the current research on NGOs can be linked to liberal theory:

- Has growing self-organization of civil society changed the relationship between state and civil society or will it contribute to changing it in the future? Is the emergence of global civil society only (or also) a response of national civil societies to national governments' practices of shifting formerly domestic political decisions to the international level and thereby reducing the opportunities for political participation of their national civil societies (Scharpf 1991, Zürn 1996)?
- Can we distinguish different types of NGOs? Which of these different types of NGOs is most important for, or successful in, the field of environmental policymaking? What kinds of activities do they pursue in order to put pressure on states and international organizations toward protecting the environment?
- How competent are NGOs and what kind of expertise can they contribute to international environmental policymaking? How does their dependency on funds from members and private and public, i.e. governmental and intergovernmental, donors influence their work?
- To what extent do environmental NGOs and economic interest groups influence each other? Are the relationships between both of them only competitive, or can they also cooperate?

The paper will *first* discuss the relationship between state and civil society in international environmental politics ([section 2](#)). We will *then* distinguish different types of environmental NGOs and describe their activities which impact on environmental policymaking ([section 3](#)). *Third*, the paper will address the competence of environmental NGOs and their dependency on financial resources ([section 4](#)). After having dealt with the relationship between environmental NGOs and economic actors ([section 5](#)), we will summarize the analysis ([section 6](#)).

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## 2. Civil Society and States in International Environmental Politics

Related to the world-wide salience of environmental problems the emergence of a global civil society is a consequence of two different developments. *First*, the salience of environmental problems gives rise to societal actors demanding international collective management of these problems by national governments. Growing ecological interdependencies in the global village set the stage for international cooperation for the preservation of the environment but does not make it certain. Certainly, collective action among states is often the only way to avoid the tragedy of the commons (Hardin 1968) or individual as well as collective suboptimal outcomes in a mixed-motive situation, but the incentives of free-riding should not be underestimated (Olson 1965) ([footnote 6](#)). For example, the riparian states of a regional sea can only protect the marine environment if they *all* agree to limiting the emission of pollutants to the regional sea. If one important riparian state refuses to go along with the limitation of marine pollution, other states will not tolerate being taken advantage of by a free rider. In this case, states will hardly arrive at environmentally beneficial collective action. States will only succeed with environmental regime-building in the issue area if they can change the behavior of a free rider by

offering positive, or threatening negative, incentives, e.g., financial and technical assistance, or political and economic sanctions. Civil society can support the activities of those states interested in establishing an environmental regime. Transnational environmental NGOs can collaborate with domestic environmental NGOs of the free riding state and put the government under pressure to agree to the effective collective management of an international environmental problem.

*Second*, the growing need to establish international policymaking systems for the environment confronts national societies with the prospect of losing control over political processes and of being deprived of governmental authorities which they can hold accountable for their (in)actions. Due to the transnational, or even global, character of many environmental problems states deal with them more and more internationally rather than domestically. The last three decades have thus seen a significant increase of international conventions for environmental protection (UNEP 1993). Most of these multilateral treaties resulted from negotiations initiated by UN organizations, notably UNEP. Ratification of such international environmental treaties requires that states implement internationally agreed-upon policies and change administrative practices at the domestic level (Victor/Raustiala/Skolnikoff 1998).

For example, legislation within the European Union dealing with issues like exhaust fumes from automobiles or harmful substances in food has significantly increased, and the EU member states had to pass national legislation or take other steps to comply with EU law; moreover, this law-making has extended to other environmental issues for which the European Union had assumed the obligation to implement multilateral treaties like the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and its subsequent adjustments and amendments.

The outcomes of international environmental negotiations, or of programmes established by international organizations such as UNEP, affect domestic policies and constrain a national civil society's ability to influence the political process. Within multi-level negotiation systems governments retain the main authority for environmental foreign policies, whereas participation in, or control of, these political processes by societal actors, national parliaments, domestic courts or subnational institutions run the risk of being undermined. The practice of multi-level environmental negotiations can open up a democracy gap as national governments bring pressure to bear on national parliaments and courts to accede to, or to abide by, intergovernmental accords by pointing out that rejection could lead to both the failure of international collective action and a loss of international reputation making it more difficult for the government to be accepted as an effective diplomatic player in the future.

Democracy consists of the possibility for democratic participation of the individual and of the equality of these individuals guaranteed in constitutional law. Democracy can be defined as the rule of the many according to the law (Bienen/Rittberger/Wagner 1998: 292). Within the nation state the electorate of a democratic political system gives those parties a mandate for collective decisionmaking which are considered to represent the interests and values of the people. Although NGOs claim to represent national societies in international negotiations, these nongovernmental organizations lack the legitimacy which domestic parties get from periodic general elections. NGOs can also pursue particular interests of their organizations or constituencies which must not always be identical with the public interest, nor do NGOs always provide procedures for democratic participation within their organizations (Schmidt/Take 1997: 18; Beisheim 1997: 23).

The internationalization of formerly domestic political processes undermines civil society's possibility of political participation. Although NGOs can contribute to bridging the democracy gap which derives from



the shifting of political decisions from the national to the international level, they are not representatives of the 'general will' of civil society. Therefore, the demand of civil society for political participation in global environmental governance can only be fulfilled if democracy at the global level will not only be open for participation of states and NGOs' delegates but also of citizens' elected representatives.

McGrew (1997: 241-254) distinguishes three different models of global democracy. *First*, the liberal-democratic internationalist model takes the report of the Commission on Global Governance (1995) as a starting point for proposals on the democratization of international politics. The Commission suggests a reform of existing institutions of international governance at the global and regional levels. It seeks to democratize the United Nations system and to enhance the participation of civil society in the UN General Assembly by creating a Peoples' Assembly and a Forum of Civil Society. The members of the proposed Peoples' Assembly consist of delegates from national parliaments but not of representatives directly elected by the citizens of member states. While the measures suggested by the liberal-democratic internationalist model can contribute to bridging the gap between national parliaments, and NGOs, and the UN, these measures fail to enhance the participation of the citizens of member states in global politics.

*Second*, the model of 'cosmopolitan democracy' proposes a reconstruction of existing forms of global governance rather than only reforming them. It involves the demand of the liberal-democratic internationalist model for the democratization of international organizations, in which national civil societies have had at best a marginal influence so far (Held 1995: 111). The model of 'cosmopolitan democracy' is consistent with the 'liberal-democratic internationalist model' insofar it suggests the creation of a second chamber of the UN General Assembly in the short-term and the expansion of regional institutions of governance. [\(footnote 7\)](#) However, the measures suggested by the model of 'cosmopolitan democracy' reach beyond those of the liberal-democratic internationalist model. 'Cosmopolitan democracy' demands the creation of a true global parliament in the long-term, of global referenda, and the incorporation of cosmopolitan democratic law into frameworks of governance at all levels. The nation-state will not be abolished by 'cosmopolitan democracy', but it will no longer operate as the only agency able to guarantee basic human and political rights and to allocate political values within its own borders. In contrast with the 'liberal-democratic internationalist model', the model of 'cosmopolitan democracy' intends to facilitate the participation of the individual citizen in global politics. However, there is a danger that 'cosmopolitan democracy' will lead to a devaluation of national parliaments and will increase the geographical distance between the elected representatives and the electorate.

*Third*, the model of 'radical communitarianism' denies the possibility of reforming existing institutions of global governance. The model posits that democracy cannot be achieved on a territorially delimited basis such as the nation state, but on a functional basis. Functional authorities need to be created at the different local, national, regional or global levels for dealing with matters related to a specific issue-area (e.g., trade, environment, health). [\(footnote 8\)](#) These functional authorities would be "directly accountable to the communities and citizens whose interests are directly affected by their actions" (McGrew 1997: 246). This model builds on a mode of politics where political decisionmakers are exposed to strong pressure of the people affected by the decisionmaking. Scharpf (1992: 11-13) distinguishes between hierarchic-majoritarian and consensual modes of politics. Democratic legitimacy and the effectiveness of democratic decisionmaking can only be achieved in the hierarchic-majoritarian mode, if there is a congruence between the people participating in, and affected by, the political

decisionmaking. While the hierarchic- majoritarian mode of politics implies that the majority can outvote the minority, the consensual mode affords the balancing of diverging interests between the different actors. The functional authorities which the model of 'radical communitarianism' provides for will prefer the consensual to the hierarchic-majoritarian mode of politics, since the model posits that the interests of the affected people should be reflected in the activities of these authorities. The model of 'radical communitarianism' considers citizens' groups as important actors in politicizing social activities and in mobilizing political participation by directly affected communities and individuals in the decisionmaking. The strong interaction between citizens' groups and the functional authorities can probably lead to a strengthening of the political participation of civil society. However, it remains an open question whether the functional authorities can effectively coordinate their activities beyond the realm of single issue areas. The inclusion of the affected communities in the decisionmaking can certainly lead to more democratic legitimacy, but it can also increase the number of actors in the political process and thus impair the effectiveness of democratic decisionmaking.

The emergence of a global civil society and the increasing practises of governments of dealing with environmental problems through multi-level negotiations and other international institutions pose new critical questions for democratic theory (Dahl 1989, Sartori 1962) about the democratic representation of civil society by (environmental) NGOs, or, more generally, about the need for new mechanisms of political participation of civil society beyond the level of the nation state. The three models of global democracy disagree on the influence conceded to civil society toward the state. More democratic participation of civil society in global politics, such as environmental policymaking, implies a weakening of state control over society.

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## 2.1 Towards a Power Shift from State to Civil Society?

What effects will growing ecological interdependencies and the creation of international environmental regimes have on global civil society in the future, especially with regard to its political influence on these processes? Are activities of environmental NGOs an expression of a more fundamental shift in the relation between state and civil society? Since national governments are perceived to increasingly share power with business groups, international organizations, and even a multitude of citizens groups it has been asserted that the "steady concentration of power in the hands of states that began in 1648 with the Peace of Westphalia is over, at least for a while" (Matthews 1997: 50).

Although NGOs have been quite successful in challenging states in international political processes dealing with environmental issues since the first UN Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972, it is by no means certain that the frequency and strength of NGO activities have already led to a power shift in favor of civil society anywhere. On the contrary, states began negotiating environmental problems at the international level long before NGOs articulated their demands. Apart from the work of experts and technical or scientific NGOs which had been invited early on to take part in information-gathering about, and technical assessments and monitoring of, environmental hazards, states were first to seek collective action at the international level, and it was not before the mid-1980s when the number of nongovernmental participants in international political processes increased commensurate

with the frequency of intergovernmental negotiations on environmental issues. Governments have realized that they often gain from the activities of environmental NGOs *within formal international political processes*, since NGOs can (1) provide information about policy options or reliable assessment of individual states' compliance, (2) inform state delegations during negotiations about the actions of other delegations, (3) publicize daily reports of the negotiations, (4) help governments to convince domestic constituencies that they cannot be blamed for an unsatisfactory agreement or policy gridlock, and (5) facilitate ratification of international environmental agreements (Raustiala 1997).

States can use the internationalization of environmental politics to preserve or strengthen their autonomy vis-à-vis domestic societies (Wolf 1998). The shifting of environmental policymaking from the domestic to the international level makes states more autonomous from their societies, since the negotiations and the process of political value allocation occur internationally, and domestic actors can much less influence the decisionmaking of governments in international negotiations than at the domestic level. In this respect, international negotiations provide an opportunity for states to agree on joint environmental policies which would normally not be accepted by their domestic societies. When granting NGOs increasing access to, and participation in, international environmental institutions, states decide on their own whether they want to reduce their autonomy from national societies, and they can always control the terms under which NGOs get involved. Governments were also increasingly aware that they can instrumentalize 'green' NGOs for their purposes or form tacit coalitions with them in negotiations as it was the case of the United States and a number of NGOs like Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace, when both were lobbying for stronger global regulation of ozone depleting substances under the Montreal Protocol in the second half of the 1980s (Parson 1993, Rowlands 1995, Breitmeier 1996).

NGOs acting *outside formal international political processes* can constrain state autonomy. States are less autonomous vis-à-vis their societies when dealing with issues to which domestic societies assign great importance; in these instances, it will be much easier for nongovernmental organizations to mobilize societal support for their demands. Conversely, states have more leeway in their negotiations when the public pays less attention. A change in the importance attributed to environmental issues on the political agenda can also affect the work of NGOs. When issues have lost salience on the global or domestic political agendas, although states continue to negotiate environmental problems or implement internationally agreed-upon regulations domestically, NGOs will find it more difficult to inform and mobilize the public. As the number of international negotiations on environmental issues has increased, environmental NGOs certainly face difficulties to focus public attention on issues that do not rank highly on the political agenda.

The technical character of many environmental problems constrains states' abilities to maintain their autonomy vis-à-vis their societies because international management is impossible without the inclusion of domestic and transnational actors representing civil society. States need the scientific knowledge, technical expertise, the monitoring capacities, or the policy advice of NGOs for (1) assessing the importance of the problem and the short- and long-term implications of policies designed for the preservation of the environment, (2) developing policies for the management of environmental problems, or (3) the monitoring of the compliance of international agreements. Most international research or monitoring programs like UNEP's 'Global Environment Monitoring System' or the 'Cooperative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-Range Transmission of Air Pollution in Europe' (EMEP) rely on participation of experts and research institutes that can communicate their concerns about increasing environmental problems to decisionmakers, to the public or 'green' NGOs. The work of assessment panels like the 'Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change' (IPCC) or scientific experts'



contributions to the drafting of various chapters of Agenda 21 show that the growing number of environmental issues regarded as internationally important also afford participation of such actors *within formal international political processes* that can enhance the prospects for consensual knowledge about the cause-effect relationships in the issue and the development of technical solutions (Haas 1992, Litfin 1994).

We conclude that the power relationship between state and civil society has not yet undergone significant change. Put differently the international activities of environmental NGOs' have mainly resulted in preserving the balance of power between state and civil society rather than in changing this power relationship fundamentally in the latter's favor. Since NGOs have not yet weakened the predominance of the state system the question arises whether the assumption that civil society is already taking shape globally is tenable, indeed.

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## 2.2. NGOs and the Fragmentation of Global Civil Society

The concept of 'world civic politics' presumes the existence of a global society of citizens. It builds on Hegel's notion of a civil society and implies the existence of a sphere at the global level wherein "free association takes place between individuals. It is an arena of particular needs, private interests, and divisiveness but within which citizens can come together to realize joint gains" (Wapner 1996: 5). A definition of civil society emphasizes three relevant aspects (Rittberger/Schrade/Schwarzer 1998). *First*, the aspect of *uncoerciveness* implies that the societal sphere is protected from governmental encroachment. Civil society possesses a degree of autonomy from the state. *Second*, the definition includes the notion of *shared basic values and identity*. Common norms and codes of behavior are shaping the interaction of the members of civil society. *Third*, *human association* is another aspect of civil society. The formation of groups or the networking of different groups are important characteristics of civil society.

Civil society is, of course, not fully independent from the state. It interacts with the state and is permeated by laws, governmental or semi-governmental organizations. Global civil society conceived as a set of actors which are able to act spontaneously and to organize themselves freely without states imposing their wills on them presupposes that the same states respect fundamental human rights, especially political and civil rights. For instance, the growth of activities of environmental NGOs in Asia is not only a consequence of increasing liberalization and world market integration, which have provided incentives for the development of the nongovernmental sector, but it is also driven by "growing democratization of political systems in the region" (Gan 1998: 27). Although democracy has been on the advance in the last decade, [\(footnote 9\)](#) 'global civil society' is still far from denoting a political reality at the end of the twentieth century. At present, the concept should not blind the analyst to the large number of constraints that forces us to conceive of global civil society as an at best incomplete or emergent, yet fragmented society.

States differ with regard to their political systems. A fully developed global civil society would comprise national civil societies with basic democratic rights and the ability to act independently from state influence. World civic politics can only be achieved in a world of democracies. Between 1973 and 1990,

the proportion of states in the world with democratic political systems has risen from 24.6 to 45.4 percent (Huntington 1991: 26). Although many former Socialist or authoritarian political systems have made the transition to democracy or are in the process of making this transition, democracy has not yet become the universally established practice of exercising public authority. Despite the impressive wave of democratization during the last three decades, reversions of fully developed democratic systems toward dictatorship or less developed forms of democracy cannot be excluded (Schmidt 1995: 185). As long as democracy cannot be established in many developing or newly industrialized countries, the OECD-world remains the center of global civil society.

In the field of the environment, the space of global civil society is currently filled primarily with actors from the societies of the Western liberal democracies; however, the recent influx of Southern NGOs should not be discounted. Western environmental NGOs have improved their collaboration on specific issues and reached agreement on many programmatic issues. For example, the climate policies of many industrialized countries in Europe and North America have been criticized by the Climate Network in Europe and the Climate Action Network in the United States both representing a dozen of organizations (Subak 1996: 60). Although Northern and Southern NGOs agree in principle on the preservation of environmental goods, programmatic consensus is much more difficult to achieve between them. The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) has demonstrated that environmental NGOs do not always agree on the means for environmental protection (Johnson 1993). Northern and Southern NGOs, for example, had different views concerning the policies necessary for the preservation of the tropical forests. Also, Western environmental NGOs still have to learn that Southern interests in wildlife protection are different from, and more pragmatic than, those prevailing in Europe or North-America. The 1997 Conference of the Parties to the 'Convention for International Trade in Endangered Species' (CITES) revealed that Southern NGOs, although in favor of measures for the protection of elephants or rhinoceroses, had a preference for protection measures that take into account the needs of developing countries and the living conditions of their populations where, e.g., newly increasing herds of elephants have already led to crop failures and the destruction of farmland. ([footnote 10](#)) Northern and Southern environmental NGOs also differ over cultural values and technical capabilities for communication. Since they operate in societies with different levels of economic development they have different views about the priority of economic development.

How can we link these findings to liberal theory? Research on environmental NGOs analyzes, *inter alia*, how the activities of NGOs shape the preferences of the state. It corresponds with the liberal conceptualization of the state-society-relationship in which the state is an agency subject to the pressures of civil society. Liberal theory, however, is not confined to analyzing the influence of civil society on the state. Skocpol (1985) rightly criticized pluralist conceptions of the state, for they limit their view to the societal input in governmental policymaking. Instead, Skocpol (1985: 9) conceives states as organizations whose goals "are not simply reflective of the demands or interests of social groups, classes, or society". States are also to some degree autonomous *vis-à-vis* their domestic societies. For instance, constitutional law often circumscribes to what extent domestic society can control the foreign policy of the government. If the constitution stipulates that the parliament must approve of an international treaty before it can enter into force, governments will normally inform, and consult with, those parliamentary groups considered crucial for reaching a majority for ratification about the content of the negotiations at an early phase before the initiation, and during the various stages, of the negotiation process. However, after the conclusion of international negotiation, parliaments usually cannot demand a re-opening of negotiations and must give their assent or risk a diplomatic crisis. Furthermore, governments look after

the interests of domestic economic actors in international negotiations often long before these actors realize the importance of the issues which are at stake. Even more strikingly, the process of European integration which led to the treaties of Maastricht 1991 and Amsterdam 1997 has revealed that governments agree on policies although some of them seem to lack the support of their domestic societies (Wolf 1997). In international environmental negotiations governments often follow their own goals independent of the political pressure of civil society. For example, the British government prevented the European Community from consenting to an international protocol on the reduction of CFCs until 1987 because it gave more weight to economic interests of the small CFC producing industry than to those of environmental groups (Maxwell/Weiner 1993).

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### 3. Types of NGOs: Advocacy and Service Organizations

Recent studies of NGOs have focussed on identifying different types of NGOs based on their activities ranging from making demands on states to offering their cooperation with them. This emphasis in NGO scholarship is based on the fact that there still is little systematic knowledge about what actions of which type of NGOs have the greatest impact on international political processes. The typology of NGOs previously suggested for the field of international peace and security may serve here as a starting point as well. Although environmental issues differ in many regards, a typology of NGOs consisting of *advocacy organizations*, *service organizations*, and *transnational criminal organizations (TCOs)* can contribute to making research on NGOs more comparable across a variety of issue areas (Rittberger/Schrade/Schwarzer 1998). *Advocacy organizations* can be understood as influencing, first of all, the process of political agenda-setting. NGOs educate the public, mobilize and organize citizens to show their concern about the issue(s) in question, and create pressure on, and lobby for their goals with, decisionmakers. The main character of *service organizations* is to provide services to other organizations or groups and to contribute to implementing public policies. Unlike these two types of NGOs, *transnational criminal organizations* create, and operate within, a transnational extra-legal 'governance' system. In addition to the enhancement of their interests in making illicit gains, a further goal of these NGOs consists in protecting them against state prosecution.

The analytic distinction between advocacy and service organizations loses much of its neatness when we apply it to the empirical world. Service organizations can, of course, contribute to placing an environmental issue on the political agenda; advocacy organizations, on the other hand, may also provide services to states and international organizations but this is rather the exception. What distinguishes one type of NGO from the other is, therefore, not only the character of their main activities, but also the extent to which the activities of environmental NGOs tend to become politicized. NGOs with a strong advocacy orientation tend to challenge governments and their policies; therefore, they are likely to generate a more confrontational climate between themselves and states.

We posit that two types of NGOs seem to be most important in the issue area of protecting the human environment: *advocacy organizations* and *service organizations*. Nonetheless, *transnational criminal organizations (TCOs)* cannot be ignored completely since they are active in black markets for products whose production or use is strictly regulated or forbidden by international or national law. Recent cases

involve the illicit trade in ivory from protected elephants or the smuggling of phased-out chlorofluorocarbons out of member states of the Montreal Protocol whose export controls for these substances are weak (Brack 1996, Werksman 1996). The practice of transboundary or transcontinental shipments of such products provides sufficient evidence to support the presumption that only organized groups are able to seize such products, to circumvent national customs clearance procedures, to make deals with, and organize the delivery to, buyers. Such organized groups must be distinguished from private companies which will normally not fall under the category of transnational criminal actors even when disposing of hazardous wastes illegally. Compared to the issue area of international security, such transnational criminal activities appear to be exceptional cases and to have a smaller negative impact on environmental protection.

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## 3.1. Environmental Advocacy Organizations

Nearly any activity which can be subsumed under the category of advocacy may become manifest during the various phases of the policymaking process. Advocacy is often conceived of as aiming at influencing the process of agenda-setting, but it affects other phases of the policymaking process as well (Cobb/Elder 1972). NGOs seek to influence intergovernmental bargaining or to push states toward implementing internationally agreed-upon rules (Breitmeier/Levy/Young/Zürn 1996a and 1996b). In the field of environmental policymaking advocacy-type NGOs provide the public with information about the state of the environment gleaned from reports produced by research institutes, international organizations, or state agencies thus, by and large, operating as transmission belts for, and as interpreters of, scientific knowledge. They often use sudden external shocks like accidents in nuclear power plants (Chernobyl) or chemical firms (Bhopal) as windows of opportunity for communicating their concern to the public and to ask for decisive political action (Gordenker/Weiss 1996: 38-40).

While the activism of environmental NGOs certainly shapes political agendas, advocacy also aims at changing the ideational context of an issue and at enhancing the sensitivity of national societies for a new problem-solving approach. NGOs are developing policy proposals and scenarios for long-term action in order to educate the public and decisionmakers about the economic and financial consequences of their policy recommendations. Environmental legislation or negotiations will only gain momentum if legislators or negotiators and the public can be convinced that policies suggested for dealing with the problem are economically and financially feasible. To gain acceptance for their policy recommendations and to change the substance of public debates which, at least initially, are often dominated by arguments about costs and economic feasibility, NGOs have to change the ideational context of the issue area. Ideational and entrepreneurial leadership (Young 1994: 39-42) by NGOs can help to establish new world views about the value and the use of environmental goods. For instance, the pressure that environmental NGOs have brought to bear on the World Bank with a view to modifying its lending policy for development projects in the Brazilian Amazon region which, until the early 1990s, were contributing to the destruction of tropical ecosystems have led the World Bank to reconsider its lending criteria and contributed to fashion a new perspective on ecologically sustainable development (Reed 1997: 230-232). [\(footnote 11\)](#) Environmental NGOs can translate scientific findings into political demands and policy proposals, and they can act more independently and forcefully than international organizations.

Environmental NGOs have not shied away from confronting enterprises with demands for ecologically

meliorative structural change of industrial production. [\(footnote 12\)](#) They can inform the public about environmentally sound products and encourage consumers to buy these rather than other products. Such a "bottom-up" approach can induce private firms to restructure their production if and when they realize that the markets for environmentally sound products will grow. In the early 1990s, for instance, Greenpeace made great efforts to persuade consumers to buy CFC-free refrigerators manufactured by the East German firm Foron. [\(footnote 13\)](#) This campaign prompted other firms to change their line of production to CFC-free refrigerators and cooling systems. In addition, environmental NGOs can also talk private firms of a given industrial sector into establishing a voluntary code of conduct making it easier for them to agree on producing less environmentally damaging products (Wapner 1998: 13).

The international context within which environmental NGOs have operated has changed significantly during the last decade. Ever since the release of the Brundtland Commission's report (WCED 1987) international environmental policymaking has moved into a higher gear. NGOs, *inter alia*, account for the increase of environmental negotiation processes and the establishment of new intergovernmental institutions dealing with environmental problems (e.g., Global Environmental Facility, Commission on Sustainable Development) as well as for the heightened salience of environmental policy within the European Union. At the same time, this changing international context has also posed a challenge to environmental NGOs which had to adapt to the newly institutionalized policymaking processes at the international level; they had to learn how to educate the public about the new opportunities for environmental policymaking, and, at least to some extent, they had to cope with the newly posited link between environment and development. After UNCED, NGOs in many industrialized countries faced difficulties to keep environmental issues on the political agenda due to economic recession, declining state revenues and growing unemployment. Confronted with the rising salience of socioeconomic issues, the prospects for environmental NGOs of keeping issues of environmental protection on the political agenda depend even more than usual on their access to the mass media and on external shocks.

Environmental NGOs have been among the first transnational actors adapting to changes in global telecommunications (Frederick 1993). They have used the new communications media such as the Internet to create information networks and to disseminate reports, press releases, etc.. The new media provided them with opportunities of strengthening their impact on agenda-setting processes, for early warning on environmental problems, and for shortening the time span between problem identification and eliciting a policy response. While spectacular action often predominates the agenda-setting activities of some environmental NGOs such as Greenpeace, this kind of action will achieve its purpose only if the NGOs can persuade the mass media to report about blockades of whalers, oil tankers, or ships loaded with hazardous wastes. Spectacular action of the same type cannot be repeated too often without losing its newsworthiness. Therefore, some environmental NGOs feel the pressure of being innovative in their public relations work in order to win the attention of the mass media and the loyalty of the public. [\(footnote 14\)](#) However, not every environmental NGO sees an advantage in spectacular action as a means of influencing agenda-setting processes, and even Greenpeace makes use of a wide range of agenda-setting activities including softer forms of action. Dissemination of printed materials, issuance of special reports, public hearings and international conferences about an environmental issue are less spectacular but by no means less important methods of influencing agenda-setting processes.



## 3.2. Environmental Service Organizations

In addition to their advocacy role, NGOs have increasingly been reputed for their services. NGOs provide unpaid services to, or carry out commissioned work for, international organizations or national governments. It has been argued that more and more NGOs are combining both strong market skills and orientation with a clear social commitment (Gordenker/Weiss 1997: 444). Although NGOs are non-profit organizations, many of them carry out commissioned work for national governments, the United Nations or other international organizations. International organizations, treaty secretariats, or other bodies established by the states member of an international environmental convention offer opportunities for environmental NGOs to perform management and service tasks. Probably the most striking example of how an environmental NGO can take on the responsibility for the administration of an international legal convention is the 1971 "Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat". This convention provides for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to serve as the treaty secretariat. The convention specifies in article 8 that IUCN shall perform the continuing bureau duties under this Convention. International environmental regimes are by far not exclusively managed by state bureaucracies and the secretariats of international organizations; instead, NGOs have increasingly become involved in regime-related functions of monitoring and verification, technology transfer, or the enhancement of scientific knowledge (Victor/Greene/Lanchbery/di Primio/Korula 1994: 17). Since the late 1970s, the number of independent and government appointed scientists participating in the International Whaling Commission has more than doubled (Andresen 1998: 436).

NGOs occasionally perform important services by reassuring treaty members about the compliance with the treaty injunctions irrespective of the legal status of these services (Breitmeier/Levy/Young/Zürn 1996a: 114). They submit information directly to treaty bodies when members assess implementation, or they inform states about cases of noncompliance. They also inform the press and the public about the extent to which the ecological goals of a treaty have been achieved. Greenpeace knows often more about the practices of whale hunting nations than certain member states of the 1946 "International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling" (Andresen 1998: 439/440). In general, NGO's monitoring of state behavior in the issue area of environmental protection provides an indispensable service to states member of an environmental treaty or regime when reviewing implementation and assessing compliance.

One of the most drastic changes of the role of environmental NGOs has occurred as a result of environmental concerns being explicitly taken into consideration by development aid agencies. Regional development banks like the Asian Development Bank (ADB), international development aid programmes like the UNDP and, in particular, church-based and other private development aid organizations have begun to assess *ex-ante* the environmental consequences of projects funded by them in developing countries (Gan 1998). The strategic intention underlying the concept of sustainable development takes on a concrete and visible form in the work of such private aid organizations which, moreover, cooperate with local, national, and international environmental NGOs. For instance, the construction of irrigation systems in arid land zones must always consider that poor soils need balanced cultivation methods in order to protect them from overuse.

Before we conclude this section, we will again explore how liberal theory can contribute to analyzing the roles of environmental advocacy and service organizations. Liberal theory considers the ideational context as a crucial factor influencing political processes at both the domestic and the international



levels. It argues that ideas or moral visions can shape the preferences of decisionmakers (Goldstein/Keohane 1993, Lumsdaine 1993). The analysis of the activities of advocacy and service NGOs suggests that both types of NGOs can contribute to changing the ideational context. Therefore, research on the influence of ideas in world politics focuses, *inter alia*, on the activities of NGOs. Ideas can be defined as beliefs held by individuals (Goldstein/Keohane 1993: 7). Three types of beliefs can be distinguished. *First*, world views, e.g. the world religions, represent the most fundamental type of beliefs because these views affect people's identities and evoke deep emotions and loyalties. Environmental NGOs contributed to the establishment of a global environmental consciousness which has changed the relationship of the people to the natural environment. *Second*, principled beliefs, e.g. that racial discrimination is wrong, consist of normative ideas "that specify criteria for distinguishing right from wrong and just from unjust" (Goldstein/Keohane 1993: 9). The activities of environmental NGOs aim at establishing such principled beliefs, e.g., that the hunting of elephants, rhinoceroses or of other endangered animals is wrong. For example, the activities of Greenpeace created a principled belief that international whaling is immoral (Andresen 1998: 439). Finally, causal beliefs are beliefs about cause-effect relationships, e.g. that an increasing atmospheric concentration of CFCs will cause the destruction of the stratospheric ozone layer with clearly recognizable consequences for the living beings on our planet. The activities of environmental advocacy and service organizations can help to generate such beliefs in the public or with decisionmakers. They contribute to, or publicize, the reports of international scientific panels assessing these cause-effect relationships. For example, the leading NGOs in the US, e.g. the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Sierra Club, and other transnational environmental groups like Friends of the Earth or Greenpeace supported the hypothesis about the possible negative consequences of CFC emissions on the stratospheric atmosphere issued by Mario Molina and Sherwood Rowland (1974). These environmental NGOs publicized the results of the scientific panels established by UNEP and, with strong support of the scientific community, alerted civil society to the cause-effect relationship between CFCs and the destruction of the stratospheric ozone layer (Lobos 1987, Benedick 1991). Research on ideational leadership of environmental NGOs will have to consider the interactions of policy networks including transnational and purely domestic NGOs (Risse-Kappen 1995b: 188). The concept of the epistemic community (P. Haas 1989) provides a starting point for the analysis of policy networks in international environmental politics. For instance, several studies have shown that epistemic communities influenced the preferences of decisionmakers during international environmental negotiations (P. Haas 1992).

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## 4. Competence and Levels of Participation

One important part of a debate about the future relationship between civil society and the state is the question whether NGOs are competent enough to take over responsibilities from states or international organizations. The competence of an environmental NGO does not only depend on skilled staff members, but also on the availability of financial resources. Furthermore, the size of an NGO's budget also determines its ability to participate at the local, regional, or international levels of environmental policymaking. The growing mobility of individuals moving back and forth between environmental NGOs and international or national governmental agencies indicates that many NGOs have gained a professional reputation for their expertise. Their acknowledged competence rests on their work on one or a few environmental issues and on meeting the challenge of demonstrating equal or even superior

expertise than their counterparts from private firms or national governments (Knappe 1993, Greenpeace 1996). Environmental NGOs have realized that they will only be taken seriously as participants in policymaking if they can rely on professional staff input. Such insight has prompted many NGOs to add academic or other professional experts to their staff. Many activities subsumed under advocacy or service tasks could not be carried out without scientists, lawyers, or policy experts working as staff members of NGOs (Reiss 1990).

However, many environmental NGOs also suffer from structural constraints inherent in the trend toward policymaking at the international level which prevent their staff from making the utmost use of their competence. Especially the small and financially weak environmental NGOs feel these constraints when international political processes overburden their travel budgets and thereby their ability to follow, monitor, and influence international negotiations. Although information on many multilateral political processes is now available on the Internet, close monitoring of, or even direct participation in, negotiations contribute to increasing the expertise of staff members because it offers opportunities for interaction with government representatives, officials of international organizations, other NGOs, and business groups. There is a clear divide between the big (and financially resourceful) NGOs like Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, the Natural Resources Defense Council, or the German Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz (BUND), on the one hand, and the small NGOs that operate with a small staff and a low budget, on the other. Scarce resources constrain the long-term study of single environmental problems, the observation of international policymaking, and the accumulation of institutional competence and memory. These resource constraints account for some of the failures of environmental NGOs to influence policymaking on less prominent issues such as desertification (Corell 1996). Environmental NGOs which are heavily dependent on fundraising for financing their activities and staff face another severe constraint. Financial support from individual donors can decrease if they cease to identify with the NGO's goals. Therefore, these organizations must focus on issues that at least some segment of civil society regards as urgently in need of being addressed. It is much easier to legitimize the work of NGOs vis-à-vis private donors if they can be convinced of the crucial role played by an NGO within well-known issue areas. Environmental NGOs need to create a 'corporate identity' in order to impress both donors and many of their individual members with their policy relevance. One way of creating such an identity is to direct the NGO's activities toward issues which can be assumed to have high salience with the public. A case in point is the overwhelming attention that environmental NGOs in industrialized countries attribute to climate change whereas other issues such as soil conservation or desertification tend to be neglected. Such trend-dependent behavior limits an NGO's ability to deal with environmental issues over the long-term. Sometimes, it also reduces the ability of an NGO's staff to build up issue-specific expertise or to preserve institutional memory.

The competence of an NGO also affects its ability to participate in multi-level environmental policymaking. At both the national and the international level, especially service organizations will have to demonstrate their ability and skills in order to be included in national or international projects, advisory groups, or assessment panels. Environmental education and project management at any level ranging from local to international require skilled experts with long-term professional experience. Competent staff members of environmental NGOs which are given the opportunity of participating in multilateral negotiations can often offer advice to national governmental delegations. Public or private research institutes regularly participate in international assessments of the state of an environmental problem, of the feasibility of alternative political solutions, and of the implementation of international programmes for the preservation of an environmental good (Greene 1998). These service organizations

fulfill tasks which are concretely defined by states, treaty secretariats, or international organizations.

The work of a research-oriented environmental NGO runs the risk of being mainly determined by the interests of states and international organizations if it depends strongly on work paid for by national or international bureaucracies. [\(footnote 15\)](#) By contrast, advocacy NGOs are much more independent in deciding on the issues to which they would like to direct attention, and whether they want to work at the local, national, or international level. Some of them like Greenpeace established bureaus in many developed and developing countries and focussed its activities on all levels of policymaking. A strong infrastructure enables big NGOs to select experienced experts from their national bureaus for leadership positions in their international headquarters and vice versa.

Liberal theory provides a basis for further analysis of the role of individuals and groups in world politics. The competence of individual staff members can be crucial for the success or failure of NGOs in political agenda-setting, compliance monitoring, or the management of environmental projects commissioned by national governments or international organizations. Current research on NGOs primarily focuses on the relationships between states and nonstate actors in world politics. Less attention has been paid to the structures of, and the decisionmaking processes in, international environmental NGOs. Studies of the composition and belief systems of NGOs' membership, staff and leadership can shed further light on the representation of the different segments of civil society by NGOs.

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## 5. NGOs versus Economic Actors

Both advocacy and service organizations do not only interact with national governments or international organizations, but communicate and collaborate with, or act against, economic actors as well. However, the relationships between environmental NGOs and private firms, associations of private companies, and trade unions have largely been ignored by NGO scholarship. In the following, we take a look at the relationships between different types of environmental NGOs and economic actors. So far, research on environmental NGOs seems to proceed from the assumption that environmental NGOs and economic actors are adversaries with conflicting goals and different constituencies. Such a view ignores that neither environmental NGOs nor associations of private firms or trade unions are homogeneous, let alone monolithic actors when pursuing their respective goals. In addition, the attitudes of both groups toward one another have undergone some change during the last decade leaving both sides more openminded for the views of the other. Villacorta (1997), for instance, explores the relationships of three development NGOs from Switzerland, the Netherlands, and the U.S. with the business sector. Her study suggests that there are "different options to pursue a relationship with business organizations, among them negotiation, collaboration, pressure, influence, exchange, and alliance building" (Villacorta 1997: 47). Furthermore, the interactions of NGOs with business organizations can lead to important shifts in the role of NGOs (e.g., increasing NGOs' participation in the market, emphasis on efficiency and professionalism, or education and lobbying). NGOs also face risks from enhancing their collaboration with the economic actors. Such risks consist of becoming elitist or of overemphasizing the logic of the market and of "leaving aside other important dimensions like the advancement of social development, the strengthening of civil society, and the protection and preservation of the environment" (Villacorta 1997: 54).

Information exchange between NGOs and economic actors, in particular, has significantly increased,

each side seeking at least to know more about the other side's view of an environmental problem and arguments for its preferred outcome of international environmental negotiations or national political processes. Private firms do not always share the same interests in particular environmental issues. New transnational economic interest groups like the 'World Business Council for Sustainable Development' have shown that economic actors are moving toward seeking ways of reconciling ecological values with business interests (Schmidheiny 1992).

Environmental NGOs themselves occasionally disagree on political strategies. For instance, they can have different views on the best way of achieving the desired goal of environmental protection or on the extent to which a compromise agreed upon in intergovernmental negotiations should be welcomed or criticized. They can also disagree on their reactions to offers of *lightened* economic actors for collaboration. 'Pragmatic' environmental NGOs, whose pragmatism is built on the belief that environmental protection can be achieved within a market economy and that openness to discussing even divisive issues with political adversaries will promote the goals of environmental NGOs in the long-term, even accept donations from private firms. 'Fundamentalist' NGOs, which are much more opposed to a political approach accepting the rules of the market economy, argue that these contributions will make environmentalists dependent on their adversaries and will thwart environmentalist goals.

Economic actors can have different interests in an environmental issue and, thus, may have different attitudes toward environmental NGOs. *First* of all, they can be interested in preserving the *status-quo* in an issue area in order to prevent changes of national energy policies. For instance, mining companies, owners of power plants, or trade unions of coal miners may form a coalition which insists on continuing with the use of fossil fuels for the production of electricity while opposing efforts to strengthen energy saving measures, to increase the production of nuclear energy, or to raise the subsidies for the use of solar energy (Breitmeier 1996: 224). They can form international coalitions of industrial sectors and trade unions to prevent the enactment of strong measures for the reduction of greenhouse gases. Their relationship with environmental NGOs is therefore fraught with conflict and even hostility. Both camps - environmental as well as economic actors - mainly interact via the media and accuse each other of pursuing unrealistic goals. Obviously, constructive interaction between *traditional* economic interest groups and *fundamentalist* environmental NGOs is more difficult to achieve than between these economic interest groups and *pragmatic* NGOs.

*Second*, transnational firms can face strong uncertainty about their own interests when confronted with international environmental negotiations. These firms can earn money with fossil energy production as well as with using environmentally sound sources of energy. Their interest structure is a mixed one consisting of both traditional elements and elements of ecological compatibility. Therefore, transnational firms tend to be uncertain about their own long-term business strategy and are undecided whether they should support the traditional, ecologically incompatible interests of coal miners, the oil industry, or of owners of fossil fuel power plants, or whether they should invest in new sources of energy with less harmful effects to the atmosphere. Deregulation of the European energy market, for instance, will increase the number of European or global players in the energy market and therefore give rise to even more *undecided players* in the energy sector (Europäische Kommission 1996). Because information gathering about possible future economic implications of any path chosen by decisionmakers in the issue area will be vital for such companies working under strong uncertainty about their future economic preferences, such undecided economic actors have a special interest in communicating with other important actors in the issue area. They will not exclude communication with any actor from the environmentalist camp and will exchange views with both pragmatic and fundamentalist environmental

NGOs if they are ready for such an exchange.

*Third*, structural ecological change in Western industrialized countries has spawned a growing industry with *environmentally like-minded interests*. Pollution abatement measures in many of these countries have induced the ecological modernization of national industries focussing on producing environmentally sound technologies and products. Transnational firms interested in selling new technologies with less harmful effects on the global climate can create coalitions with environmental NGOs since the interests of both converge. Firms may hope that states will agree on the international management of environmental pollution as a means to create an even stronger demand for environmentally sound products. Environmental NGOs and environmentally like-minded companies, however, still treat each other with scepticism. Transnational firms still fear environmentalists, especially the fundamentalists, because they credit them with the potential of blaming private firms for environmentally harmful practices for this often results in the loss of public credibility with consumers.

**Table 1: Relationship between Different Types of Environmental NGOs and Economic Actors:**

		Environmental NGOs	
		Pragmatic NGOs	Fundamentalist NGOs
<b>Economic Actors</b>	Status-quo oriented interests	Confrontation	Hostility
	Mixed interests	Occasional Conflict	Occasional (severe) conflict
		Exchange of Information	Exchange of information
		Identification of common and divergent interests	Identification of common and divergent interests
	Environmentally like-minded interests	Coalition-building since the interests of both converge	Firms fear fundamentalist NGOs' potential of blaming them for environmentally harmful activities
		Private firms providing financial support for environmental NGOs	

Until the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in December 1997, many industrialized countries have long opposed strict targets and timetables in the climate change negotiations due to the dominance of powerful status-quo oriented domestic coalitions of firms and trade unions. The question remains to what extent the political work of environmental NGOs on climate change accounted for the agreement of states member of UNFCCC on the reduction of greenhouse gases in developed countries by 5 to 8 percent between 2008 and 2012 below 1990 levels. [\(footnote 16\)](#) Increasing communication and collaboration between environmental NGOs and economic actors have contributed to promoting environmentally- like-minded interests and to weaken coalitions of private firms such as the Global Climate Coalition in the United States which has launched a multi-million-dollar campaign to warn American consumers against the possible negative economic effects of internationally agreed- upon reduction measures a few months before the third conference of the parties to UNFCCC convened in Kyoto. [\(footnote 17\)](#) Therefore, the political work of

environmental NGOs will only pay off if they succeed in weakening the cohesion of the coalitions of status-quo oriented economic actors in industrialized countries.

The liberal model of international politics pays strong attention to the interactions between transnational societal actors (Moravcsik 1997). Both types of actors, environmental NGOs and economic actors, are assumed to be rational and to be motivated by maximizing their own utility. Such a utilitarian approach rests on Bentham's notion of individuals as calculators "of pleasures and pains" (Doyle 1997: 226). It has been shown that both types of actors can be further distinguished. The pattern of interaction between the different types of environmental NGOs and economic actors is determined by the core interests of these actors. However, such a focus on the relationship between private actors in world politics cannot ignore the role of the state as a third pole in this network for it is capable of influencing the outcomes of the interactions between economic actors and environmental NGOs. It will depend on the ability of the state to defend its role against economic actors as a provider of public goods (e.g., social welfare, minimum wages, preservation of the 'commons') to civil society whether the relative importance of private actors in world politics will further grow. At present, however, an analysis of international environmental politics which ignores the role of the state and of international organizations would miss reality.

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## 6. Conclusion

Liberal theory provides a framework for analyzing the interactions between state and civil society. National governments can, of course, lose autonomy towards their domestic societies when they see themselves confronted with the pressure of environmental NGOs in a particular issue area. However, states can also be conceived as actors seeking autonomy from their societies. The increasing number of internationalizing political processes opens up new opportunities for national governments to negotiate with other governments relatively uncontrolled by their societies. Since international and domestic politics are intertwined, states have been increasingly acting as coordinators between international and domestic bargaining (Scharpf 1991). The demands of transnational civil society actors for more democracy at the global level have opened up a discussion which forces democratic theory to extend its analysis beyond the state. While liberal theory has made important contributions to the lively academic debate about the 'democratic peace' (Brown/Lynn-Jones/Miller 1996), the democratization of international institutions and the policymaking remains an open agenda for future research.

The analysis of the activities of environmental advocacy and service organizations suggests that states benefit from the resources provided by transnational civil society actors for environmental problem-solving. Service organizations can improve the effectiveness of state policies. Their competence is an important resource for states. Environmental NGOs have realized that their work requires professionalism to achieve their goals. As a result, they are increasingly credited with being competent actors by international organizations and national governments. The (non)availability of financial resources also influences the competence of NGOs.

The agenda-setting activities of advocacy organizations are not always directed against states; instead they can perform the function of an early-warning system and alarm the public and national governments about environmental problems. The demands of advocacy organizations for better participation in environmental policymaking and for early information on international negotiations at the domestic level



can, of course, create new challenges for domestic and international governance. Conveying environmental policies to the public has become essential to governments for securing the support of constituencies. Further research is needed to understand how the domestic public is influenced by transnational civil society actors.

The relationship between environmental NGOs and economic actors is one of the most promising fields for future research. Although the material interests of economic actors and the immaterial interests of environmental NGOs are often in opposition, both types of interests can also converge and encourage coalition-building among environmental NGOs and economic actors. Exploring the relationship between environmental NGOs and economic actors could generate knowledge about the ability of civil society for self-coordination. In this connection, civil society would comprise a sphere of private rules for environmental protection agreed-upon between NGOs and economic actors without further state intervention. This kind of research will contribute to answering how much state regulation civil society needs for preserving the human environment.

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## 8. Footnotes

1

Transnational relations became a buzzword with the publication of the volume on "Transnational Relations and World Politics" edited by Keohane and Nye in 1972 and their subsequent book on "Power and Interdependence" published in 1977. Risse-Kappen (1995a: 7) argues that the former concept of transnational relations was "ill-defined" and makes an effort to refine it.

2

One example for NGOs' improved access to intergovernmental bodies is their recent participation in the UN General Assembly's Special Session to Review Agenda 21 held in New York in July 1997. On this occasion, Greenpeace and the Third World Network spoke as representatives of environmental NGOs and criticized state representatives for insufficient political achievements since Rio 1992. See United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS): *Environment and Development File: Briefings on Agenda 21 Follow-Up*, Vol. III, No. 15, September 1997.

3

On the growing literature about environmental NGOs see Princen/Finger 1994, Morphet 1996, Raustiala 1997, Ringius 1997, Stairs/Taylor 1992, Weiss/Gordenker 1996.

4

For examples on realist and institutionalist explanations of international politics see Baldwin (1993), Hasenclever/Mayer/Rittberger (1997), and Keohane (1986).

5

On two-level games see Putnam 1988. An effort to apply this approach was made in the volume edited by Evans/Jacobsen/Putnam 1993.

6

On the distinction between collaboration and coordination games see Stein (1990). On the situation-structural approach to international regimes see Hasenclever/Mayer/Rittberger (1997: 44-59)

and Zorn (1992). Cf. also List/Rittberger (1992, 1998) on different types of situation structures in the field of the environment and their differential conduciveness to cooperation.

**7**

For a critical discussion of the concept of cosmopolitan democracy and of other reform proposals regarding the United Nations see Bienen/Rittberger/Wagner (1998).

**8**

On such functional approaches to democracy see Dryzek (1995) or Burnheim (1995).

**9**

Huntington (1991) describes the democratization of a large number of countries in the 1970s and 1980s, but points out that Asian and Islamic countries have been immune to more recent efforts of Western countries to support the democratization of political systems in Asia and in many African countries.

**10**

See Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, November 12, 1997, page 5.

**11**

A similar critique was directed by environmental NGOs against the construction of hydroelectric dam projects like the Narmada Dam in India and the Three Gorges Dam in China (Gan 1998, Wapner 1998).

**12**

In the 1980s, environmental NGOs in the U.S. were blaming the CFC producing chemical firms for the damaging effects of CFCs to the stratospheric atmosphere and demanded a world-wide phasing-out of CFC production (Breitmeier 1996: 141-143).

**13**

See Der Spiegel 47:25, June 21, 1993, pp. 96-99.

**14**

Turner (1998: 39) concludes, that the most important terrain for waging political struggle in the information age will be the field of public opinion. While representatives of social movements and NGOs may employ traditional strategies of political persuasion such as lobbying, their greatest power resides in their capacity to influence public values and norms on a global scale.

**15**

Gordenker/Weiss (1997: 448) argue, that for international organizations the collaboration with service organizations has some advantages, since NGO personnel are available without the customary long recruitment process or without long-term contracts. Their numbers can be expanded and contracted far more easily than is the case with permanent staff appointed to intergovernmental secretariats or even those serving on limited-UN contracts. However, subcontracting and outsourcing also create new problems for international organizations, since their influence on the execution and on the quality of commissioned work decreases.

**16**

The Kyoto Protocol is included in the report of the third conference of the parties to the climate change convention held in Kyoto from 1 to 11 December, 1997. See United Nations FCCC/CP/1997/7/Add.1. In contrast with the obligation for the reduction of greenhouse gases, some developed countries are allowed

by the protocol to stabilize their emissions (e.g., the Russian Rederation) or to increase their emissions by 1 percent (Norway), 8 percent (Australia), or 10 percent (Iceland).

*17*

See International Herald Tribune, September 11, 1997, p. 6.

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