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FOOD, THE ENVIRONMENT, AND DEMOCRACY: A CASE STUDY OF THE MARINE CONSERVATION MOVEMENT'S SHIFT FROM STATE- CENTERED TO MARKET-BASED APPROACHES

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the shift by the marine conservation movement from state-centered to market-based strategies and its implications for the democratization of food and agriculture. Using two theoretical frameworks from social movement theory – the opportunities approach and resource mobilization theory – three factors are identified as driving the shift by marine conservation organizations to market-based strategies. First, limited success using state-centered strategies created the impetus for marine conservation organizations to seek out alternative strategies. Second, changes in food and agriculture created opportunities for market-based strategies. Specifically, the emergence of retailers as leader actors, the development of an economy of qualities in food, and the increasing use of governance each created opportunities for market-based approaches. Lastly, foundations used their funding to channel marine conservation organizations toward market-based approaches. The outcome is a market-based model of environmental change in which movement organizations work with and/or pressure industry to make changes. In concluding, the potential implications of the shift toward market-based strategies for democratic politics are examined. Whereas market-based strategies open new opportunities for movements, the use of such strategies may also constrain democratization in that they: (1) promote consumption, (2) depend on the market, and (3) use private governance. Each of these potential constraints is briefly examined.

A key objective of the Michigan State University (MSU) School of Agrifood Governance and Technoscience has been to assess the possibilities for the democratization of food and agriculture. Busch (1999; 2000) contends that three mostly undemocratic institutions – science, the market, and the state – largely order food and agriculture, as well as society more generally. The result is that “experts” are largely responsible for the governance of food and agriculture and thus, economic, administrative, scientific, and technological decisions are largely removed from democratic politics. As decisions regarding food, its qualities, and its production are, at least partially, ethical, normative, and value judgments, the MSU School contends that such decisions should not be solely the purview of experts (Busch 2002; Middendorf and Busch 1997). Rather, members of the MSU School argue that strong, deliberative forms of democracy (i.e., networks of democracy) are necessary, if just and sustainable agrifood systems are to be enacted.

An area of research that has been partly neglected by the MSU School is that of social movements and the role that they play in the democratization of food and agriculture. Historically, social movements have been powerful advocates of social

justice, environmental sustainability, and democracy. Research indicates that active, robust, and diverse social movements are necessary if environmental, health, and communal interests are to be included in political processes (Bartley 2003; Bridge and Jonas 2002; McCarthy and Prudham 2004; Newell 2000). For example, social and environmental movements have played an important role in countering agribusiness in U.S. food and agriculture. This has included advocating for the rights of farm workers and calling attention to the health and environmental risks of agriculture, among other things (Allen 2004; Pulido 1996). In short, social movement organizations (SMOs) have been important actors in the democratization of food and agriculture.¹

Seeking to extend the research of the MSU School to include the role of social movements in food and agriculture, this paper examines a particular social movement: the marine conservation movement. The marine conservation movement is a sub-movement in the environmental movement focused on the conservation of fisheries and marine environments. It consists of a diversity of organizations, including large global environmental organizations, such as the World Wildlife Fund; organizations focused solely on marine conservation, such as the Blue Ocean Institute; grassroots organizations; and aquariums. In the late 1990s, most marine conservation organizations shifted from using primarily state-centered strategies to market-based ones. Thus, whereas marine conservation organizations previously tried to pressure the state to enact legislation to protect fisheries and marine environments, today they largely use the market to pressure industry to implement more sustainable practices.

This paper examines the factors undergirding the shift from state-centered to market-based strategies by much of the marine conservation movement. To do this, two theoretical frameworks from the sociology of social movements are used: resource mobilization theory and the opportunities approach. Resource mobilization theory focuses on how SMOs obtain resources and the effects that this process has on movement organizations (McCarthy and Zald 1977). The opportunities approach examines how external conditions affect movements (McAdam 1999). Until recently, the opportunities approach often focused almost exclusively on the political system, as it most directly affected social movement organizations. However, as contemporary movements are increasingly using market-based

¹ The environmental movement is a kind of social movement. While its focus is on environment issues, the environmental movement is often similarly organized and uses similar kinds of strategies as other social movements.

strategies, Schurman (2004) argues that the opportunities approach needs to be broadened to include the economy. In other words, opportunities created by the economy generally and particular economic sectors also need to be examined. Building on these theoretical positions, this paper examines how political and economic conditions and internal movement funding have affected the choice of strategies in the marine conservation movement. Explicating the forces that undergird the marine conservation movement's shift to market-based strategies is important for understanding how political economic changes affect social movements, their choice of strategies, and the outcomes they generate, as well as the implications movement strategies have for democratic politics.

Three key factors are identified as driving the shift toward market-based approaches: (1) limited successes using state-centered strategies, (2) opportunities created by the restructuring of the food and agriculture sector, and (3) foundation funding. A lack of success pressuring the state spurred many in the marine conservation movement to seek out alternative strategies. However, it was emerging economic opportunities created by changes in the food and agriculture sector, and the prioritization of market-based strategies by foundations that channeled movements toward market-based approaches. The primary focus of this paper is on the latter two, as these two factors shifted the movement toward the market after prolonged failure in the political arena. Three developments in food and agriculture are particularly important to the creation of opportunities for market-based strategies. These are: (1) consolidation and concentration in the retail sector and the development of buyer-driven commodity chains, (2) the shift toward competition on quality, and (3) the increasing use of private governance mechanisms.

For the marine conservation movement the outcome is a model of social change that ties marine conservation to the market. In short, the conservation of fisheries and marine environments is largely dependent on the ability of marine conservation organizations to shift the market toward more sustainable seafood options. Whether or not marine conservation organizations can do this remains to be seen. However, beyond its intended objectives, the shift toward market-based strategies may also have unintended effects. Specifically, the shift to market-based strategies by the marine conservation movement, and more generally by social and environmental movements, may affect the democratization of food. Based on the case of the marine conservation movement, three aspects of market-based strategies may constrain democratic practices in food and agriculture: (1) the promotion of consumption, (2) the prioritization of the market, and (3) the use of private

governance. These potential constraints are examined in the conclusion section of the paper.

Data on the use of market-based approaches by marine conservation organizations were gathered using multiple qualitative methods. First, I conducted 31 in-depth interviews with representatives from organizations engaged in marine conservation. Initial interviewees were identified through a contact who was active in the movement and through analysis of movement documents. A snowball sampling technique was then used to identify additional participants. As the movement was comparatively small at the time of field research in 2005-2006, an official from most marine conservation organizations participated in the study. Officials included the head of organizations for many smaller environmental movement organizations, and usually the person in charge of either marine conservation overall or specific campaigns for larger organizations. Interviewees were questioned as to the strategies they used, the reasons they used particular strategies, and advantages and disadvantages to state-centered and market-based strategies. Second, participant-observation was undertaken wherever possible. This included attending movement related activities and events, such as public presentations and meetings. Lastly, I examined movement documents, including press releases, newspaper advertisements, reports, brochures, newsletters, and websites.

The remaining portions of the paper are organized as follows. First, I outline the main tenets of resource mobilization theory and the opportunities approach. Second, I provide a brief overview of the marine conservation movement and the limited success it has had using state-centered approaches. In this section, the environmental degradation of fisheries and the negative environmental impacts associated with aquaculture are also discussed. Third, I analyze the factors undergirding the shift to market-based strategies by marine conservation organizations. Specifically, these are the economic opportunities created by the emergence of retailers as lead actors, the shift toward an economy of quality, and the use of private governance in food and agriculture. Additionally, I analyze the role played by foundation funding in channeling the movement toward market-based strategies. Fourth, I examine the kinds of market-based strategies being used by marine conservation organizations. In concluding, I discuss the potential implications that the shift by social and environmental movements toward market-based strategies may have for democratic practices in food and agriculture.

RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES: SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY

Research on social movements has demonstrated that both internal and external conditions affect the emergence of movements, SMO strategies, and movement outcomes. Two of the more robust theories in social movement research that examine how such internal and external conditions affect movements are resource mobilization theory and opportunities theory.

Originally formulated by McCarthy and Zald (1977), resource mobilization theory examines the processes by which SMOs mobilize resources and the ways that this affects movements. Specifically, resource mobilization theory theorizes that the procurement of resources is a vital task of SMOs, which, in turn, can influence their emergence, strategies, and outcomes. For example, researchers working in the tradition of resource mobilization theory examine different means of funding (e.g., constituents, foundations, and philanthropy), the practices used by SMOs to try to obtain funding (e.g., direct mail, grants, and partnerships), and the effects of funding on SMOs (e.g., organizational structure, choice of objectives, and strategies).

Recently, social movement researchers have begun to pay greater attention to foundation funding and its effects on movements. Generally, foundations have become more influential actors in social movements over the last twenty-five years. In part, this is an outcome of increases in the number of foundations and in foundation resources. For example, from 1980 to 2000, foundation assets increased by approximately 1,000 percent, and were estimated at between \$419 and \$429 billion in 2002 (Faber and McCarthy 2005). The growth in the number of foundations has been just as staggering, increasing from 30,300 in 1988 to 61,800 in 2002. Of the foundations that have assets of \$1 million or more (or gave more than \$100,000 in grants), more than two-fifths were formed in the 1990s (Faber and McCarthy 2005).

There are two conflicting views on the role of foundations in social movements. On the one hand, the conventional view is that foundations are neutral bodies that use a merit-based system to disburse funds to various organizations to achieve specific objectives (e.g., the alleviation of poverty, environmental conservation, and improved educational outcomes). From this perspective, foundations are understood as relatively passive actors in movements. On the other hand, some argue that foundation funding “channels” SMOs (Brulle and Jenkins 2005; Faber and McCarthy 2005). In other words, foundation funding – directly and indirectly – steers SMOs toward certain organizational structures, objectives, and strategies. For example, research has shown that professional SMOs receive greater foundation funding, and foundations prefer to fund reform-based, nonstructural

kinds of objectives and SMOs that use institutional tactics (e.g., lobbying and working with business) (Brulle and Jenkins 2005). Additionally, Faber and McCarthy (2005) argue that the threat of being excluded from foundation funding or losing such funding often disciplines SMOs.

Whereas resource mobilization theory largely focuses on the procurement of resources, the opportunities approach examines how conditions external to movements affect them. In its original formulation, the opportunities approach focused on how the political system affected SMOs (McAdam 1999). Specifically, McAdam (1996) outlined four components of political systems that affect movements: (1) openness, (2) stability of elite alignments, (3) degree of support from political elites, and (4) the likelihood of state repression. In short, in McAdam's (1999) theorization, the opportunities approach focuses on how the structure and practices of the political system, as well as the makeup of members in the political system, affect the emergence of movements, and movement strategies and outcomes.

More recently, Schurman (2004) has extended the opportunities approach to examine how economic factors may also affect movement opportunities. Arguing that contemporary social movements are increasingly targeting corporations directly, she contends that the focus by social movement theorists on political opportunities is too narrow. As some movements are increasingly trying to use the market, she asserts that understanding the structure of the economy and particular industries is also important to understanding movement emergence, strategies, and outcomes. Examining the anti-biotech movement in Europe, she outlines four components of an industry or economic sector that influence SMO opportunities. The first is the competitive behavior of firms. This includes such things as how firms operate (e.g., low cost vs. high cost, lower turnover vs. high turnover) and protect and expand market share. Second, how an industry and/or commodity chain is organized can affect SMO opportunities. Third, industry and corporate culture can also influence SMO opportunities. For example, some industries or companies may be more open to ideas of social responsibility and environmental sustainability than others. Lastly, the character of the goods or services themselves affects SMO opportunities.

The above social movement theories are used to analyze the shift from state-centered to market-based strategies by the marine conservation movement. Resource mobilization theory is used to examine the role that foundation funding played in the shift toward market-based strategies by the marine conservation movement. Schurman's (2004) re-theorization of the opportunities approach to

include the structure and practices of the economy is used to examine how restructuring of the food and agriculture sector created conditions conducive to the use of market-based strategies.

ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION, THE MARINE CONSERVATION MOVEMENT, AND POLITICAL FAILURE

Fisheries and marine environments have been, and continue to be, severely degraded (Clausen and Clark 2005; Food and Agriculture Organization 2004; Jackson et al. 2001; Pauly et al. 2003; Worm et al. 2006). Since the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) began monitoring fish stocks in the 1970s, the number of fish stocks fully exploited or overexploited has progressively increased. In 2004, the FAO (2004) estimated that 52 percent of the world's fish stocks were fully exploited (at their maximum sustainable limits), while 16 percent were overexploited, 7 percent were depleted, and 1 percent were recovering from depletion. However, Pauly et al. (1998) argued that such measurements fail to capture the actual degree of environmental degradation that is taking place. For example, they observed that a process of "fishing down the marine food web" is taking place, which is resulting in not just depletion of specific fish species, but more general ecological disorganization and degradation (Pauly et al. 1998; see also Worm et al. 2006).

Although aquaculture is often viewed as a potential solution to problems of over-fishing, many forms of aquaculture also have negative environmental impacts. Most notable among these occur in the shrimp and salmon industries. As shrimp farming has expanded and become more intensive, concerns have been raised as to the destruction of mangrove forests, salinization of coastal lands, loss of genetic diversity in shrimp populations, access to natural resources, and the effects of the use of excessive antibiotics, fungicides, pesticides, detergents and chemicals on surrounding environments (Barbier 2003; Stonich and Vandergeest 2001). Salmon farming often uses open-water net pens, a practice that has raised concerns regarding the impact of pollution on surrounding environments, and the introduction of invasive species and disease transfer to wild salmon (Goldburg, Elliot, and Naylor 2001; Goldburg and Naylor 2005; Krkosek et al. 2007). Additionally, as salmon are carnivorous, concerns have been raised that salmon farming may increase fishing pressure on pelagic fisheries (Naylor, Eagle, and Smith 2003).

Despite the considerable environmental degradation of commercial fisheries and marine environments and the negative environmental impacts of some forms of

aquaculture, historically, marine life and habitat have received significantly less attention from U.S. environmental movement organizations than have other forms of environmental degradation. Consequently, the marine conservation movement continues to be a relatively small part of the U.S. environmental movement. Nevertheless, the organizations active in marine conservation are quite diverse; including large, global, mainstream environmental movement organizations such as Environmental Defense and the World Wildlife Fund, organizations dedicated solely to marine conservation (e.g., SeaWeb and Blue Ocean Institute), various grassroots organizations, and several aquariums.

Similar to other environmental movements, until the late 1990s, the marine conservation movement primarily used traditional state-centered strategies to try to achieve their objectives. That is, using a variety of mechanisms, they often tried to pressure the state to enact stronger regulations to protect fisheries and marine environments. This effort culminated with the passage of the Sustainable Fisheries Act in the United States in 1996. Then, many in the movement believed that they had achieved a significant victory. The act stipulated that the National Marine Fisheries Service and its eight regional management councils had to reform management plans to (1) prevent overfishing and rebuild overfished stocks, (2) report and minimize bycatch, and (3) designate essential fish habitat for all federally-managed fish species and minimize adverse effects of fishing on those habitats (Marine Fish Conservation Network n.d.). However, the Sustainable Fisheries Act has not had the impact that many in the marine conservation movement hoped it would have. Furthermore, since the passage of the act, interviewees noted that the movement has been continually forced to take “defensive action” to try to ensure the act’s implementation and prevent its rollback. In part, it was the inability of the marine conservation movement to achieve its goals using state-centered approaches that spurred leaders to seek alternative approaches, namely market-based strategies. For example, speaking of the movement’s political failures, one interviewee remarked, “[i]t became painfully apparent that relying on public policy to save the oceans was a mistake. We needed to find new approaches to create incentives for conservation.” Thus, having had little success using state-centered strategies, the marine conservation movement began looking toward other options in the late 1990s.

THE MARINE CONSERVATION MOVEMENT: FROM STATE-CENTERED TO MARKET-BASED APPROACHES

This section examines the factors that undergirded the shift from state-based to market-based strategies by marine conservation organizations. While a lack of success using state-centered strategies spurred marine conservation organizations to seek alternative approaches, other factors steered the movement toward market-based strategies. First, changes in external conditions, namely the structure and practices of the food and agriculture sector, created opportunities conducive to the use of market-based approaches. Specifically, the emergence of retailers as lead actors, the shift toward an economy of qualities, and the increasing use of governance mechanisms all created opportunities for market-based strategies. Second, internal conditions, most notably a shift in foundation funding, channeled the marine conservation organizations toward such market-based strategies. Each of these sets of factors and the ways in which they worked to shift the marine conservation movement toward market-based approaches is examined in this section.

Economic Opportunities and the Restructuring of the Food and Agriculture Sector

Retailers as lead actors. Retailers have become the lead actors in the U.S. agrifood system today. After being remarkably unconsolidated for much of their history, U.S. supermarkets began to consolidate quite rapidly in the 1990s (Konefal et al. 2007). Thus, whereas in 1990 the largest five supermarkets controlled less than 30 percent of the market, by 2004 they controlled more than 48 percent of supermarket sales (Progressive Grocer 2005). Since then, the retail sector has continued to consolidate, as there have been several significant mergers in the past five years, including the purchase of Wild Oats by Whole Foods and the acquisition of 1,124 Albertson's supermarkets by Supervalu (USDA ERS 2011). Simply stated, a few supermarkets now control a significant portion of the market for food-at-home sales.

The emergence of retailers as lead actors has restructured the agrifood system in several ways, including the development of buyer-driven commodity chains (Busch and Bain 2004; Folds and Pritchard 2005; Ponte and Gibbon 2005). With concentration and consolidation, buying power of large retailers has increased, which has given them greater power over upstream actors. The outcome has been a restructuring of many agrifood commodity chains from producer- or processor-driven to buyer-driven. Consequently, retailers increasingly set prices, quality standards, delivery schedules, and certification requirements for suppliers (Busch

2007; Konefal et al. 2007). However, while consolidation and concentration have increased the power of retailers, they have also made retailers more vulnerable to market shifts and disruptions. For example, actions and events that threaten a retailer's market share, such as contaminated products or social movement campaigns, can significantly affect profitability. To a certain extent, this has made some retailers more sensitive to pressure or potential pressure from social and environmental movements (Busch and Bain 2004; Konefal et al. 2007). Thus, in using market-based strategies, marine conservation organizations are trying to take advantage of both the power and the vulnerabilities of retailers.

In discussing the shift toward market-based strategies, a key theme that emerged from interviews was the potential opportunities that large retailers offered. For example, one interviewee commented, "If you want to move the market, you go work with the big buyers, like Wal-Mart and Costco." Additionally, in a commissioned external review of the movement, the Bridgespan Group (2005:2) noted the opportunities presented by large retailers:

Demand in the U.S. can be moved by working with a small number of very large purchasers of seafood, due to the concentration of the market and the impact that a major buyer can have in the supply chain. Our research demonstrates that aggressive, sustained campaigns can shift companies' practices, which in turn can lead to noticeable changes in the market and put pressure on other actors – both suppliers and other buyers.

Thus, the emergence of retailers as lead actors has been a key factor undergirding the marine conservation movement's shift toward market-based approaches. Many in the movement recognized the opportunities presented by retailers and, consequently, have sought to design market-based strategies to try to pressure retailers.

Economy of qualities in food. Consolidation and concentration of the retail sector, combined with increased competition from Wal-Mart and nontraditional stores, such as warehouse clubs, has intensified competition among food retailers.² One response has been a shift from price competition toward competition based on

²Wal-Mart is distinguished from traditional supermarkets because most of its store formats combine food sales with sales of a wide range of other kinds of products. Combined with Wal-Mart's scale of operations and advances in supply chain management, this has given Wal-Mart competitive advantages over traditional supermarkets. In fact, consolidation of the food retailing industry has been partially a response to Wal-Mart's entry into the sector (Konefal et al. 2007; Martinez 2007).

quality (Busch and Bain 2004; Konefal et al. 2007; Martinez 2007).³ That is, instead of just trying to undersell each other, retailers are also trying to out-compete each other on quality. Competition on quality includes such attributes as greater diversity of goods, particularly in terms of production attributes (e.g., organic, natural, fair trade, and local); the development of private labels; and more services (e.g., prepared-ready-to-eat foods). The result is the emergence of an ‘economy of qualities’ in the U.S. retail sector (Busch and Bain 2004; Ponte and Gibbon 2005). One consequence of this development is that the marketplace for food is more diversified. Among other things, this means that there are more market opportunities for products with environmental attributes.

Specifically, three aspects of the shift toward competition on quality have created opportunities for market-based strategies for marine conservation organizations. First, there has been an expansion of “high-quality,” “natural,” and “health-oriented” retailers, such as Whole Foods. These stores present opportunities for increasing the market presence of sustainable seafood, as the idea of sustainable seafood is congruent with their market niche. Such retailers have often been among the first targets of many market-based campaigns undertaken by marine conservation organizations. Thus, they have played an important role in fostering the marine conservation movement’s shift toward market-based approaches.⁴

Second, many mid-sized regional retailers have turned to quality to try to differentiate themselves and carve out a niche in an increasingly competitive marketplace. Realizing that they cannot compete with the large retailers on price, such retailers have tried to differentiate themselves through quality. Examples include larger selections of ethnic foods; organic, environmentally sustainable, and fair trade goods; specialty labels; and more prepared foods; among other things

³The shift toward quality has also been aided by increased consumer concern regarding food and how it is produced, as well as greater political consumerism (DuPuis 2000; Goodman and DuPuis 2002). In other words, separate from retailers’ competitive strategies, there has been increasing concern among some consumers as to food safety and quality and how food is produced. However, competitive retailer strategies have also propelled such market trends.

⁴It needs to be noted that the responses of such stores have been quite mixed. Some have been willing to work with movement organizations quite cooperatively, whereas others have been more resistant. For example, according to interviewees, Whole Foods was resistant to efforts by Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform to get it to stop selling farmed salmon. However, in 2008, the Whole Foods did announce private environmental standards for the farmed salmon it sells (Whole Foods 2011).

(Konefal et al. 2007). Recognizing the opportunities presented by the shift toward quality competition by such retailers, movement organizations have targeted them or sought to work with them. For example, Wegmans, a mid-sized northeastern retailer, has worked with Environmental Defense to develop environmental standards for farmed shrimp and salmon. Through its partnership with Environmental Defense, Wegmans is seeking to differentiate itself from its competitors, and in doing so, appeal to consumers with environmental preferences.

Third, large national retailers, such as Kroger, have begun to diversify their stores by carrying an increasing array of organic and/or eco-friendly, high-quality niche products, and more ethnic foods (Konefal et al. 2007). For such retailers, sustainable seafood offers the opportunity to differentiate themselves from their competitors and potentially expand market share (i.e., compete with mid-sized and specialty retailers that threaten to take market share via quality). As these stores control the largest market share and thus, have the most upstream influence, trying to work with these stores has become a key strategy for marine conservation organizations.

In sum, competition on quality has created opportunities for market-based strategies in that it may make retailers more amenable to sustainable seafood and partnering with marine conservation organizations. In using market-based strategies, marine conservation organizations have sought to take advantage of these opportunities by branding sustainable seafood as a quality product that retailers can use to differentiate themselves.

The private governance of food. The third development in the food and agriculture sector that is relevant to the use of market-based strategies is the shift from government regulation of food and agriculture toward the use of governance approaches. In brief, food and agriculture is increasingly regulated not by government but via governance where regulatory responsibilities are shared among private (and sometimes public) actors (Busch 2007; Loconto and Busch 2010). Additionally, such governance is often market driven (Bernstein and Cashore 2007; Cashore, Auld, and Newsom 2004), meaning the standards enacted often reflect market demands. The most common forms that governance has taken in food and agriculture are private standards and third-party certification. Increasingly, private actors, such as corporations, SMOs, and industry associations, are developing standards to regulate nearly all aspects of food and agriculture (Busch and Bain 2004; Fuchs, Kalfagianni, and Havinga Forthcoming). For example, there are private standards to regulate food safety, quality, worker conditions, and environmental impacts. Conformity with private standards is often checked using

third-party certification, which is a conformity-assessment mechanism where independent actors check compliance with standards with audits (Hatanaka, Bain, and Busch 2005).

The shift from government toward governance has created opportunities for marine conservation organizations to directly participate in the governance of food and agriculture. Previously, movement organizations pressured the government to enact legislation that incorporated their interests. As such, movement organizations were largely regulation takers in that they had to accept and abide by the regulations developed by the government. However, the shift from government toward governance in food and agriculture has created opportunities for movement organizations to participate in governance directly. Put differently, as governance is now a shared and collective activity, movement organizations can either make their own standards or work with industry to develop standards. Thus, instead of relying on the government to enact and implement regulations, the shift to governance has created opportunities for marine conservation organizations to enact their own regulations and ensure their implementation through third-party certification. The primary way in which the movement has done this is through the Marine Stewardship Council, which is an independent marine conservation body that develops environmental standards for fisheries.

Foundation Funding

While the above developments in the food and agriculture sector have created opportunities for market-based strategies, marine conservation organizations required resources to take advantage of them. Foundations are a crucial source of funding for marine conservation organizations and have been influential in channeling the movement toward market-based strategies. Perhaps more so than any other facet of the environmental movement, foundations occupy a lead role in the marine conservation movement.⁵ In particular, two foundations have been a driving force behind the shift toward market-based strategies by marine conservation organizations, namely the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and

⁵Partly, this is because fewer foundations fund marine conservation than land-based forms of environmentalism.

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the Pew Charitable Trust.⁶ Efforts by each of these foundations to shift the movement toward market-based strategies are reviewed below.

With its Seafood Choice Initiative, the Packard Foundation shifted the bulk of its funding for marine fisheries toward market-based strategies. According to the Bridgespan Group's (2005:2) review of the movement, the Packard Foundation had "become frustrated with the slow progress that its traditional approach, centered on policy reform, was making toward the goal of improving the health of ecosystems." The Packard Foundation's response was to shift much of its funding toward market-based strategies. To do this, the Packard Foundation launched its Seafood Choices Initiative in 1999. In its first five years (1999 to 2005), Packard's Seafood Choices Initiative received \$37 million in funding, with 60 percent (\$23 million) coming from Packard.⁷ The Seafood Choices Initiative consisted of five components: (1) certification, (2) consumer and gatekeeper education, (3) single-species campaigns, (4) business-environmental organization partnerships, and (5) markets campaigns (Bridgespan Group 2005). The breakdown of funding among the components is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS WITHIN THE SEAFOOD CHOICES INITIATIVE (Bridgespan Group 2005).

COMPONENT	FUNDING	
	RECEIVED (%)	AMOUNT FROM PACKARD (\$)
Certification.	57	12,000,000
Consumer and gatekeeper.	20	5,200,000
Single-species campaigns.	10	2,300,000
Business-environmental partnerships.	5	825,000
Market campaigns.	4	860,000
Research and Coordination.	4	1,600,000 ^a

^aThis number is an approximation based on the Packard Foundation's total investment of \$23 million.

⁶ While no interviewees could provide exact numbers, one interviewee estimated that Packard and PEW were responsible for approximately 60 percent of foundation funding for marine and ocean conservation.

⁷ The remaining funding came primarily from the budgets of environmental organizations, corporations, and other foundations (Bridgespan Group 2005).

As the Seafood Choice Initiative indicates, the Packard Foundations has shifted the bulk of its funding for marine and ocean conservation to market-based strategies. The prioritization of market-based campaigns has continued since the review of the Seafood Choice Initiative by the Bridgespan Group. For example, an analysis of the grants the Packard Foundation issued in 2006 indicates that, of the 31 grants Packard issued, 17 went to market-based initiatives, and accounted for approximately \$7,685,000 of the \$10,907,000 Marine Fisheries grant budget (The David and Lucile Packard Foundation 2007a).⁸ Furthermore, in 2007, the Packard Foundation stated that it was funding various kinds of market-based efforts, and that it does “not fund fisheries management activities directly, and is phasing out support for work on federal-level fisheries policy” (The David and Lucile Packard Foundation 2007b).

The Pew Charitable Trust is the second foundation that was instrumental in shifting marine conservation organizations toward market-based strategies. Most notable is that two of the lead organizations in the movement were established by Pew: the National Environmental Trust and SeaWeb.⁹ For each organization, their initial funding, organizational structure, mission, and actions undertaken were all planned by Pew. Specifically, as several interviewees noted, in establishing the National Environmental Trust and SeaWeb, Pew’s objective was to develop a more market-oriented approach in marine conservation. For example, one interviewee familiar with the National Environmental Trust commented that its founding was a “result of the fact that they [Pew] felt that environmentalists were sort of losing the war on environmental messaging and communications.... Overall there was not a great message going out there to the media that here are the problems.” Similarly SeaWeb was founded to do “public relations for the environment” and “social marketing.”

In sum, in deciding to shift much of its funding toward market-based strategies, foundations channeled marine conservation organizations toward the economic opportunities created by restructuring in the food and agriculture sector. Thus, while many organizations predated the turn to the market by foundations, and some

⁸Included in those grants classified as market-based initiatives are grants to help fisheries become certified, as well as other supply-oriented grants. In one instance, one grant was split between support for Marine Stewardship Council certification and the elimination of harmful fisheries subsidies. While this grant was included as a market-based grant, it needs to be noted that some activities funded by it are not market-based. Thus, the money calculated as going to market-based activities is only an estimate, and may be slightly inflated.

⁹In 2007, the National Environmental Trust was folded into Pew’s environmental program.

were already experimenting with market-based strategies, foundation funding was an important force in shifting organizations toward market-based strategies. For example, before the Seafood Choice Initiative, there were almost no market-based strategies in marine and ocean conservation. However, since its implementation, and the efforts by Pew, market-based strategies have become the most prominent approaches used in marine conservation. At the time of research in 2006, every market-based strategy undertaken by the marine conservation movement, except one, had been, at least partially, funded by the Packard Foundation.

CONSERVING FISHERIES VIA THE MARKET

Opportunities for market-based strategies created by restructuring in the food and agriculture sector and the prioritization of market-based strategies by foundation funding, combined with a relative lack of success using state-centered strategies, have resulted in market-based strategies becoming the most prominent approach of the marine conservation movement. In using market-based strategies, marine conservation organizations are trying to shift markets toward more environmentally-sustainable products. To do this, movement organizations seek to educate and mobilize consumers and/or pressure and work with retailers. The objective of such strategies is to exert pressure on upstream actors to implement more sustainable harvesting, production, and/or processing practices. The expected outcome is improved levels of environmental sustainability. Additionally, to ensure that there is a supply of sustainable products and that products that claim to be sustainable are in fact sustainable, marine conservation organizations are also using market-driven forms of governance, such as private standards and third-party certification.

The market-based approaches used by the marine conservation organization can be divided into three kinds: (1) consumer-focused, (2) retailer-focused, and (3) supply-focused. The first two – consumer- and retailer-focused – seek to shift the market toward more sustainable seafood options. The primary form consumer-focused strategies have taken is “seafood cards.” Seafood cards are wallet-sized cards that categorize seafood according to its sustainability.¹⁰ Typically, the cards

¹⁰The cards are supported by additional publications, most notably websites, which give consumers additional information. Complementing this campaign have also been efforts to enroll chefs as public proponents of sustainable seafood and to get the idea of sustainable seafood into the press, particularly the food press.

categorize seafood into two or three categories depending on its sustainability.¹¹ The idea behind the cards is that consumers will consult them to help them purchase seafood that is sustainable. Thus, the objective of the cards is to educate and mobilize consumers to shift toward more sustainable options. By doing so, the hope is that this will send market signals to retailers that there is demand for more sustainable products. In other words, marine conservation organizations are trying to use consumers to pressure retailers to use their market power to require more sustainable upstream fishing and aquaculture practices.

Retailer-focused strategies entail either working with or, more rarely, publicly targeting retailers to try to get them to shift their seafood offerings toward more sustainable options. Generally, retailer-focused strategies have entailed working cooperatively with retailers, often privately. Some of the more prominent examples of such efforts include the New England Aquarium advising Royal Ahold on their seafood offerings, Environmental Defense and Wegmans jointly developing environmental standards for farmed shrimp and salmon, Wal-Mart agreeing to gradually switch its wild caught seafood to only MSC-certified products, and WWF collaborating with Kroger on its seafood offerings. In working with retailers, marine conservation organizations often frame seafood as a quality product that retailers can use to differentiate themselves. That is, they are trying to frame sustainable seafood as congruent with the shift toward quality.

In the earlier stages of the marine conservation movement's use of market-based strategies, single-species campaigns were a widely used approach. Single-species campaigns target a fishery that is severely degraded, such as the Patagonian Toothfish (i.e., Chilean Seabass), or seafood products produced using forms of aquaculture that have negative environmental impacts, such as farmed salmon. As of 2006, there had been five single-species campaigns: "Give a Swordfish a Break," "Take a Pass on Chilean Seabass," "Caviar Emptor," "Farmed and Dangerous," and "Pure Salmon." Single-species campaigns often incorporate both consumer and retailer-focused strategies.¹² One distinguishing mark of some single-species campaigns is that some often took a more confrontational approach toward

¹¹In 2006, there were three different seafood cards in the U.S. The Monterey Bay Aquarium, Blue Ocean Institute, and Environmental Defense each had their own card. Within the movement this has become a source of tension, as not all the cards categorize the sustainability of certain kinds of seafood in the same way. As each organization uses different methodologies in calculating the sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture, they come up with different results occasionally.

¹²They also often included working with restaurants and chefs to get them to stop offering certain kinds of seafood and to become public spokespersons for sustainable seafood.

retailers. For example, after the Farmed and Dangerous campaign made little progress trying to work with the Safeway supermarket chain, they launched a public campaign called “Smarten up Safeway.” The campaign targeted Safeway for selling farmed salmon, an unsustainable product, and the ways in which this contradicted Safeway’s green branding.

Besides the above demand-oriented initiatives, the marine conservation movement has also used supply-focused approaches that seek to ensure a supply of sustainable seafood. Specifically, taking advantage of the shift toward governance, marine conservation organizations have sought to develop their own standards and regulatory bodies. The primary form this has taken is the Marine Stewardship Council.¹³ Established in 1997 by several marine conservation organizations and the transnational corporation, Unilever, the idea behind the Marine Stewardship Council is to create an agreed-upon standard for what constitutes sustainable fishing and mechanisms to ensure that certified fisheries do in fact meet the standard. To accomplish this, the Marine Stewardship Council develops environmental and traceability standards for sustainable fishing and accredits third-party certifiers to certify fisheries according to such standards. As of July 2010, there were 90 fisheries certified as compliant with Marine Stewardship Council standards (Marine Stewardship Council 2010).

The other supply-focused strategy used by movement organizations is to work with retailers to get them to implement private standards. Whereas Marine Stewardship Council standards are general standards, private standards are often retailer specific. One such example is the collaboration between Environmental Defense and Wegmans to develop environmental standards for farmed shrimp and salmon. In this case, the two parties worked cooperatively to develop standards that minimize the negative outcomes of shrimp and salmon aquaculture (Environmental Defense 2007).

In sum, the marine conservation movement has developed a new model of social movement change (see Figure 1).¹⁴ Instead of focusing primarily on trying to

¹³ Currently, efforts are underway to establish a similar organization to the Marine Stewardship Council for aquaculture: the Aquaculture Stewardship Council. The effort is being spearheaded by the World Wildlife Fund, which was also involved in the establishment of the Marine Stewardship Council.

¹⁴ The marine conservation movement has not been the only, or the first, environmental movement to use market-based strategies. For example, see the forestry movement with the Forest Stewardship Council, the Paper Campaign, and the Home Depot Campaign. Nevertheless, the marine conservation movement has been at the forefront of innovation in the use of market-based strategies.

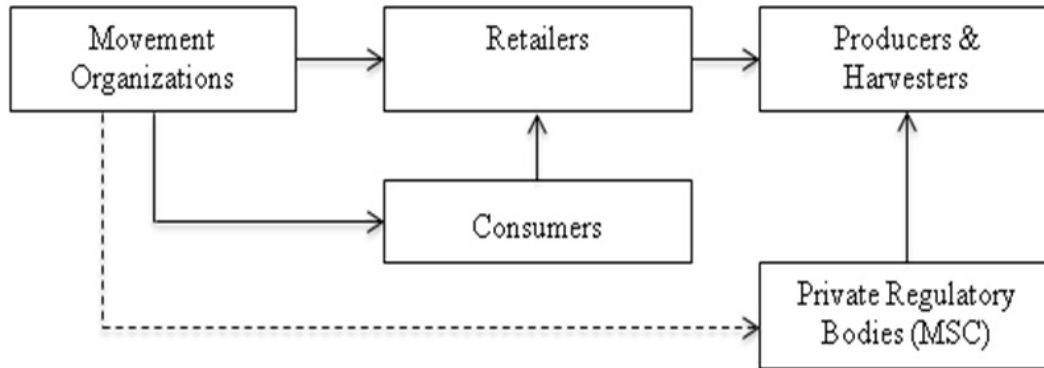


FIGURE 1. MARKET-BASED MODEL OF ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

pressure the state to enact regulations, the marine conservation movement is increasingly working with and pressuring industry. Specifically, using consumer- and retailer-focused strategies, the movement is trying to shift the marketplace for seafood toward more sustainable options. In doing so, the hope is to create incentives for upstream producers to shift toward more sustainable fisheries, fishing techniques, and aquaculture practices.

CONCLUSION

This paper examines the shift from state-centered to market-based strategies by the marine conservation movement. Using two theoretical frameworks from the sociology of social movements – the opportunities approach and resource mobilization theory – the factors undergirding this shift are analyzed. Three primary factors are identified. First, a dearth of political opportunities provided the impetus for marine conservation organizations to seek alternatives to state-centered strategies. Second, emerging economic opportunities resulting from changes in the food and agriculture sector created incentives for market-based approaches. Lastly, foundation funding for market-based strategies channeled marine conservation organizations toward such strategies. The outcome is a market-based model of social change in which movement organizations primarily work with and/or pressure industry to make changes.

In concluding, I examine the potential effects of the shift by the marine conservation movement to market-based strategies for democratic practices in food and agriculture. As the MSU School has documented, agrifood systems are often undemocratic in that scientific, business, and governmental experts are largely responsible for the governance of food and agriculture. Furthermore, agribusiness often has considerable influence over such experts (Allen 2004; Jordan and

Constance 2008). The result has often been undemocratic decisions and policies that favor private interests and promote economic outcomes over social, cultural, and environmental ones. Historically, social and environmental movements have been an important counter to both experts and agribusiness in that they represent marginalized groups and interests (Allen 2004; Pulido 1996). In this way, while social and environmental movements advocate for specific objectives (e.g., environmental conservation and worker and minority rights), they have also been an important democratizing force in food and agriculture (Goldstone 2004; Ibarra 2003; Offe 1985).

As they believe that market-based strategies are more effective for achieving their aims, marine conservation organizations are increasingly shifting to them. However, while the shift to market-based strategies is a reaction to changing opportunities, in shifting to such strategies, movement organizations are also adapting to political and economic changes. In other words, the marine conservation movement has sought to develop strategies that allow it to be effective in the face of neoliberal political economic conditions. Thus, whereas Taylor (2005:130) argued that market-based strategies by social and environmental movements attempt to be “in the market, but not for it,” my findings indicate that marine conservation organizations are often “in the market and for it.” That is, they largely accept the structure, practices, and ordering of the market, and use market mechanisms (i.e., supply and demand) to influence business. As such, the marine conservation movement may face significant institutional constraints in trying to achieve its objectives. Furthermore, marine conservation organizations’ use of market-based strategies may also undermine the democratization of food and agriculture. Specifically, I identify three aspects of market-based strategies as potentially constraining to both movement outcomes and democratization: (1) the promotion of consumption, (2) the prioritization of the market, and (3) the use of private governance. Below, I briefly comment on each of these.

First, a key component of the market-based strategies of the marine conservation movement is the promotion of consumption as a form of political agency. On the one hand, political consumption may be empowering to people and enabling of democracy, as it gives them an additional means by which to voice their preferences and views (Micheletti 2004). On the other hand, the promotion of political consumption may also constrain democracy. First, it ties participation to wealth. This means that those who are wealthier have more options to voice their preferences and views, while most of the people may be too poor to participate in such practices. Thus, consumption may give some people an additional avenue to

express themselves, but it also constrains the participation of many. Second, consumption is often an individual act motivated by personal preferences. For example, in promoting consumption as a form of movement participation, marine conservation organizations are partially framing marine conservation as “simply a matter of individual will rather than something that must be organized and struggled over in collectivities” (Allen and Guthman 2006:411-412). That is, the message of market-based strategies is, in part, that consumers expressing their preferences in the market are sufficient for achieving marine conservation. In many ways, such individual action is anathema to democracy, especially the deliberative forms stressed by the MSU School and others, which often entail collective decisions and processes of dialogue and negotiation (Barber 1984; Busch 1999).

Second, with the shift to market-based strategies the market becomes the key arbitrator of social and environmental movement objectives. In other words, the degree to which environmental standards and practices are adopted becomes largely dependent on the willingness of business to implement them. And, business’s willingness is largely dependent on how profitable such environmental standards are and/or the threat of loss in profit because of negative publicity due to movement pressure. This indicates that, with market-based strategies, movement outcomes become tied to questions of competitive advantages. In short, this means that marine conservation becomes a question of profitability. Additionally, making the market the arbitrator of sustainability transfers control over sustainability to a relatively small set of market actors. As economic sociology has shown, markets are not democratic. Some actors have more power, as they have more resources and information. Those with more power often have more influence. For the marine conservation movement, the implication is that the largest retailers may become the most influential actors in deciding the sustainability of fishing and aquaculture.

Third, the shift from government to governance has created opportunities for social and environmental movements to develop their own standards and oversee their implementation. On the one hand, this may result in more stringent environmental standards than government regulations. On the other hand, it may also produce non-democratic forms of governance. For example, concerns have been raised regarding the democratic character of private standards-development, both in terms of who is included in the process and how much influence different actors have (Hatanaka, Konefal, and Constance Forthcoming). Thus, the potential exists for governance to become a closed process consisting of industry representatives and selective environmental organizations. In this way, as opposed to democratizing food and agriculture, governance may just be a continuation of the

expert-based forms of governance that have often characterized the regulation of food and agriculture. Furthermore, governance is often market-driven (Bernstein and Cashore 2007; Cashore et al. 2004), meaning that the market, and not the public good, largely determines the kinds of standards developed and implemented. For example, in the wake of several controversial certifications, questioning of whether the Marine Stewardship Council is driven more by market pressures than sustainability has increased (Jacquet et al. 2010).

On the one hand, these findings are congruent with research on other social movements that use market-based strategies. For example, research on fair trade and farm labor has noted the constraints of market-based strategies to achieve substantial change (Brown and Getz 2008; Shreck 2005). On the other hand, this research extends the findings of research on market-based strategies in that it begins to explicate the potential effects of such strategies for democratization. While additional research is needed, my findings suggest that it is not sufficient for social and environmental movements to just act on external opportunities. I contend that, in doing so, they may contribute to trends that are largely designed to limit their power, such as the undemocratic neoliberal restructuring of governments and food and agriculture (Busch 2010; Harvey 2005). In other words, whereas historically, social movements, have been a response to the undemocratic structure, practices and outcomes of science, the market, and the state, with the turn to market-based strategies, social movements are acquiescing to what has become the most dominant of the three institutions, the market. Thus, to achieve their aims, movement organizations may also need to transform the opportunities presented to them and seek to create new ones. Among other things, this may entail not just trying to use the market, but also contesting and restructuring the market itself.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

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