

Conflicts and Coalitions Within and Across the ENGO Community

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Overview

Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (ENGOS) have been the focus of a considerable amount of research that examines how these actors influence environmental policies and the conditions that allow them to be effective. Less attention has been paid to the diversity of opinions within the ENGO community concerning the content of those policies. This article contributes to the ENGO literature by providing a conceptual framework that characterizes ENGO values and their preferred approaches to governance. The framework is used to illuminate salient patterns of conflict and coalitional behavior and to project future trends in global environmental politics.

The first component of the framework focuses on three values that ENGOS employ when diagnosing environmental problems and proposing solutions: ecological sustainability, economic efficiency and distributive equity. While evolving notions of ecological sustainability reflect the primary value espoused by the ENGO community, economic efficiency and distributive equity reflect broader societal concerns that often conflict with one another in a wide range of public policy debates. This article argues that efforts to harmonize ecological sustainability with either economic efficiency or distributive equity are increasingly apparent across the ENGO community. It also notes the challenge of harmonizing all three values and suggests that the most likely coalitions will be found along sustainability-efficiency and sustainability-equity "interfaces." These coalitions will not be limited to ENGOS, but will include other societal interest groups that privilege efficiency or equity as a primary value.

The second component of the framework focuses on different remedies that ENGOS prescribe in response to their diagnoses: top-down regulations administered by states and/or international regimes, bottom-up approaches that increasingly emphasize decentralization and community empowerment, and greater use of market mechanisms. The emphasis on stronger international regimes is in some ways an extension of past ENGO strategies that rely on the

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state to correct for perverse individual incentives. International regimes become necessary when the scope of environmental problems expands beyond the borders of any given nation-state. The emphasis on decentralization has a number of motivating factors that can include efficacy, equity and efficiency considerations. The emphasis on market mechanisms can reflect both efficacy and efficiency considerations.

The utility of this framework lies less in the novelty or comprehensiveness of its components than in its conceptualization of their interplay and in its ability to make sense of emerging coalitions that are cutting across the ENGO community. This article's most important claims are that (1) the future of global environmental politics will be best understood in terms of the tension between the values of efficiency and equity as they become harmonized with ecological sustainability and (2) governance reforms that emphasize market mechanisms and decentralization are more likely to gain traction in the domain of global environmental politics than those relying on centralized authority within international regimes.

The next section provides a modest literature review of ENGOs with a focus on ENGO ideologies in terms of values, goals and strategies to attain stated goals. The third section provides definitions for ecological sustainability, economic efficiency and distributive equity and examines the degree to which different segments of the ENGO community are trying to harmonize their primary value with secondary values that are held by other socioeconomic interests. The fourth section discusses the emergence of state solutions and three subsequent trends in which the state is deemphasized as the institutional loci for governance solutions to environmental problems. The fifth section illustrates how the ENGO community reflects conflicts and coalitions as they relate to the issue of climate change. The final section concludes with some tentative thoughts regarding the future of global environmental politics.

ENGO Typologies

There are a variety of conceptualizations of the environmental movement and the ENGO community and no shortage of terms to define the fault lines and fissures that characterize them. The most salient fault line that can be identified in academic literature on ENGOs distinguishes between the methods, division of labor or functional roles of two distinct segments of the ENGO community: one segment works to effect change within established governance institutions and the other adopts a confrontational stance with respect to those institutions and the actors that they empower. This differentiation has alternatively been referred to as that which exists between engagers vs. confronters, insiders vs. outsiders, and the politics of partnership vs. the politics of blame.¹

1. Young 1999; Grant 2000; Betsill and Corell 2001; Winston 2002; Pulver 2004; Richards and Heard 2005; and Betsill 2006.

The strategic divide described by these authors seems to correlate with the ideological cleavage between ecological and conservation perspectives within the West European ENGO community.² Groups with an ecological perspective are more likely to resort to direct action and other confrontational strategies (sometimes in combination with insider tactics) while groups with a conservation perspective work exclusively within the existing institutional framework.³

More nuanced discussions of the environmental movement within the US and Europe focus on ideological fissures and issue orientation in addition to methods or functional roles. McCormick borrows from Rosenbaum in dividing the US ENGO community into three groups: pragmatic reformers, deep ecologists and radicals.⁴ McCormick's depiction of pragmatic reformers is consistent with the above conceptualizations of engagers, insiders, and conservationists. Within the ecological camp, however, he distinguishes the deep ecologists who seek fundamental changes in human-environment relationships from similarly-minded radicals. The key difference between the two is the radicals' use of direct action and other confrontational tactics that sometimes include property destruction. Switzer sees a closer link between the philosophy of deep ecologists and radical tactics and considers the two simultaneously. For Switzer, more important distinctions occur among deep ecologists/radicals, mainstream environmental organizations and the environmental justice movement. Her consideration of mainstream environmental organizations seems consistent with previous discussions of engagers, insiders and pragmatic reformers.⁵

In a recent volume that uses a conceptual framework that comes the closest to the one offered here, Clapp and Dauvergne identify four environmentalist ideal types: market liberals, institutionalists, bioenvironmentalists, and social greens.⁶ Market liberals see considerable potential for harmony between economic growth and environmental sustainability. Institutionalists seem very similar to previous conceptions of pragmatic reformers.⁷ Bioenvironmentalists appear to resemble traditional conservationists and social greens subsume environmental problems within a broader suite of social justice concerns. Brulle and Jenkins seem to go the furthest in their ideological categorizations, identifying eight distinct environmental discourses and discussing a number of subtle variations within the most dominant discourses.⁸

With respect to issue orientation, Taylor⁹ borrows from an OECD¹⁰ report that distinguishes between two distinct periods in the environmental movement: the period from the 1960s to the mid-1980s and the period from the

2. Dalton 1994; and Dalton et al. 2003.
3. Rohrschneider and Dalton 2002.
4. Rosenbaum 2003, cited in McCormick 2004, 91–93.
5. Switzer 2004.
6. Clapp and Dauvergne 2005.
7. Rosenbaum 2003; and McCormick 2004.
8. Brulle and Jenkins 2005. They include wildlife management, conservation, preservation, reform environmentalism, environmental justice, deep ecology, ecofeminism and ecotheology.
9. Taylor 2001.
10. OECD 1998.

mid-1980s to today. The former period saw local and national issues dominate the agenda, with immediate threats to public health serving as the underlying driver and a relatively simple form of politics as a result. The latter period has witnessed a shift in orientation toward global issues with long-term threats to ecological sustainability and a more complex set of political dynamics. Bernstein also makes a temporal argument in tracing shifts of environmental norms from a limit to growth paradigm of the 1970s through sustainable development paradigms of the 1980s to a liberal environmentalism in the 1990s.¹¹

In addition to the temporal variation in issue orientation, an important geographic variation continues to persist between Northern and Southern NGOs.¹² Most Southern NGOs tend to be grassroots organizations focused on immediate threats to local communities although some do engage at the national and/or international level.¹³ Their agenda often reflects a broader set of concerns than ecological sustainability alone, often including economic and political marginalization.¹⁴ Although the environmental justice movement seems to be a discourse of Northern origins, its premises sometimes mirror substantive concerns of Southern NGOs and the theme of environmental injustice underpins many of the transnational advocacy networks that bring together the two groups.

Finally, McCormick also makes reference to the relevance of NGOs representing views of socioeconomic groups with interests in the environmental debate. Such groups, along with NGOs that represent a broader set of social or economic concerns beyond the environment, can be considered 'bridge' groups.¹⁵

ENGO Values

Existing literature discerns a clear cleavage between organizations that work within existing governance institutions and those that challenge them. Within the former group, most of the existing literature reviewed for this article differentiates organizations in terms of their functional roles or issue orientation. There is some work on ENGO ideologies and worldviews, but with the exception of Clapp and Dauvergne, this work does not focus sufficient attention on the interplay between different values that are emphasized by ENGOs and their relationship to governance approaches and policy preferences.

This section provides definitions for three values that ENGOs often emphasize in debates on sustainable development and global environmental governance. After briefly commenting on how these values relate to alternative conceptions of sustainability it discusses the interface between what can be con-

11. Bernstein 2001.

12. Duwe 2001; and McCormick 2005.

13. Gardner 1995; and Mercer 2002.

14. Khor 2000. See additional joint NGO statements on Third World Network website (Third World Network 2008).

15. McCormick 2005, 93.

sidered as the primary value of the vast majority of ENGOs (ecological sustainability) and two values that might be considered secondary to most of the ENGO community but that are primary for other actors involved in policy debates (economic efficiency and distributive equity).

The above three values are distilled from what has been referred to as the three pillars of sustainable development. Ecological sustainability emerges as the core value from the environmental pillar, economic efficiency emerges as the core value from the economic pillar, and distributive equity emerges as the core value from the social pillar. The values are subject to debate. Sustainability and sustainable development are contested terms with numerous definitions.¹⁶ The definition of ecological sustainability that is adopted here may be viewed by some as too vague to capture important distinctions between weak vs. strong notions of sustainability.¹⁷ Alternatively, economic efficiency and distributive equity may be looked upon as overly narrow in that they fail to adequately capture the full suite of economic, social or human development objectives that are manifested in sustainable development discourse.¹⁸ In response to such critiques, this article focuses on the interplay between values, their relationship to governance approaches and their relevance for emerging patterns of conflict and coalitional behavior. The neglect of debates regarding more nuanced aspects of the ecological dimension of sustainability and the omission of additional development objectives as separate values may limit the comprehensiveness of the framework in terms of its ability to capture the full range of perspectives on sustainable development. But it simplifies the framework without detracting from its claims.

Some actors emphasize the tensions between these competing values while others see possibilities for reconciliation or harmonization. Different perspectives on the interrelationships between values help to illuminate the contours of contemporary policy debates as well as the coalitions that are cutting across the ENGO community and linking different segments of this community to the rest of society.

Ecological Sustainability

While the section on ENGO ideologies noted a number of important divisions within the ENGO community regarding strategies and tactics, this article will assume that the primary value or goal of all ENGOs is reflected in the term ecological sustainability, broadly construed. This article defines ecological sustain-

16. World Commission on Environment and Development 1987; Lele 1991; Pezzey 1992; Princen 2005; Bruyninckx 2006; and World Conservation Union 2008.

17. Weak vs. strong notions of sustainability differ in their stance on whether the environment holds inherent value that is distinct from its value to humans and whether human capital can be substituted for natural capital. See Paterson 2006.

18. In particular, one reviewer critiqued the omission of growth as a distinct value in sustainable development debates. While some segments of the development community no doubt value economic growth independent of efficiency considerations, growth objectives that are divorced from efficiency considerations are likely to be marginalized within the ENGO community.

ability as a condition pertaining to the health of a given ecosystem. What constitutes health for a given ecosystem is in some respects subjective and different. NGOs may define ecological sustainability as narrowly as steady-state preservation or as broadly as sustainable exploitation. But all will likely subscribe to a primary goal that falls within a broad definition of ecological sustainability.

Economic Efficiency

As with sustainability, there are multiple definitions of efficiency. Economic efficiency typically denotes the minimum cost for a given level of output or production. Narrowly defined from the perspective of a given actor anything that increases the cost of production could be considered inefficient. However, broadly defined from the perspective of society as a whole, economic efficiency can be viewed in terms of socially optimal levels of production and consumption. Externalities typically lead to market outcomes that are socially inefficient.¹⁹ So while actors sometimes invoke economic efficiency concerns in response to policy initiatives that seek to protect the environment, the internalization of externalities should be viewed as efficiency enhancing in most circumstances.

Distributive Equity

Distribution concerns the allocation of costs and benefits. Equity concerns justice and/or fairness. Distributive equity can be defined as a value that seeks a fair and/or just distribution of the costs and benefits of an activity across different segments of society (including different countries, economic sectors, social classes, races, genders, etc.). Like many other values, distributive equity is largely subjective. Most groups that highlight equity as an avowed goal characterize status quo conditions as inequitable and thus consider redistribution of costs and benefits as a means of enhancing equity. Groups that resist policy reforms may frame their resistance in terms the “unfairness” of bearing a disproportionate amount of the costs associated with such reforms. That said, many actors resist environmental reforms simply because they have negative distributive impacts regardless of whether or not those impacts are perceived as equity enhancing by broader segments of society. In such cases resistance is more a matter of distributive self-interest than of distributive equity.

The Sustainability-Efficiency Interface

A historical tension can be discerned between ecological sustainability and economic efficiency (narrowly construed) when production costs increase as a result of environmental regulations. Efficiency claims have often been framed in

19. Externalities are costs or benefits that accrue to bystanders or non-parties to a given transaction or production process.

terms of regulatory impacts on the economic competitiveness of regulated actors. As noted in the discussion of efficiency, however, such claims are often made hollow when considering efficiency in terms of socially optimal levels of production and consumption. Efficiency concerns have also been invoked with respect to the choice of regulatory tools.²⁰ Such claims often do not take issue with the goals of environmental regulation, but rather with the form of regulation. Ecological sustainability and economic efficiency are not viewed as inherently incompatible but the latter is seen as needlessly sacrificed in practice. A related efficiency concern often targets the state and its fallibility in determining optimal levels of natural resource exploitation and/or pollution and in administering environmental regulations. These claims emphasize markets as the ultimate arbiter of economic activity. Again, such claims do not see ecological sustainability and economic efficiency as incompatible, but emphasize the perils of failing to take into consideration the latter in pursuit of the former.

Efforts to find harmony along the sustainability-efficiency interface emphasize a set of common themes that stem from the above concerns. They include the pursuit of the least-costly (or most efficient) methods for attaining environmental objectives,²¹ internalizing externalities, eliminating environmentally damaging subsidies²² and harnessing the power of markets through certification programs, tradable permit schemes and privatization initiatives.²³

A number of ENGO programs conduct research that explicitly attempts to harmonize ecological sustainability and economic efficiency. The World Conservation Union (IUCN) Economics and the Environment program,²⁴ Worldwatch's Sustainable Economics library,²⁵ and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Macroeconomics program²⁶ are but a few examples of targeted initiatives within mainstream ENGOs that incorporate some of the aforementioned themes. Other ENGOs like the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD),²⁷ the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED),²⁸ the World Resources Institute (WRI),²⁹ Resources for the Future (RFF)³⁰ and Environmental Defense³¹ would appear to integrate the aforementioned

20. Portney and Stavins 2000; and Keohane et al. 1998.

21. Ibid.

22. Myers and Kent 2001; World Bank 2003; and Schorr 2004.

23. Tietenburg 2002; and Anderson and Hill 1996.

24. World Conservation Union 2008. See discussion of the 5th thematic area, Greening the World Economy, which can be interpreted as a call to internalize externalities.

25. Worldwatch 2007. See especially Roodman 1996, 1997; McGinn 1998, and Mastny 2003.

26. World Wildlife Fund 2007. See additional documents from The Private Sector-WWF Forum to Promote Ecosystem Services and Payments for Ecosystem Services.

27. International Institute for Sustainable Development 2008. See Trade and Investment, Sustainable Natural Resources Management, and Climate Change and Energy project reports.

28. International Institute for Environment and Development 2007. See discussion of natural resources and sustainable markets.

29. World Resources Institute 2007. See Markets and Enterprise program publication series.

30. Resources for the Future 2007. Most RFF publications address one or more of the sustainability-efficiency themes. See especially crosscutting topics like environmental regulation, policy instruments and research tools.

31. Environmental Defense 2007. See Innovative Markets and Corporate Partnerships themes.

themes throughout many or all of their campaigns and research programs. ENGOs like the Property and Environment Resource Center (PERC) that promote free-market environmentalism represent the far-end of the spectrum with respect to their emphasis on property rights and market efficiency in harmonizing economic and environmental goals.

Green business alliances are another manifestation of ENGO activity that seeks the harmonization of ecological sustainability with economic efficiency.³² Many of the prominent ENGOs within the engager segment of the ENGO community are involved in one or more partnerships with the private sector. Some green business alliances and ENGO-private sector partnerships take the form of an NGO that may or may not be considered an ENGO. The purpose of such organizations is to serve as a bridge between the environment and business communities. In some cases these organizations reflect efforts on the part of the business community to reach out to the environmental community as in the case of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD). In other cases like Environmental Defense's corporate partnerships and the WWF-backed Forest and Marine Stewardship Councils it is the ENGO community that is the impetus for the creation of a bridge organization. Within the engager segment of ENGO community the distinction between groups that support green business alliances and those that do not is probably less relevant than the stringency and/or integrity of the standards to which each ENGO subscribes and the rigor with which they pursue such business alliances. Few mainstream ENGOs would shun an alliance with private sector partners if the terms were attractive enough, but few are as proactive in forging corporate alliances as Environmental Defense.

The Sustainability—Equity Interface

The most salient historical tension between the goals of ecological sustainability and distributive equity can be seen in Southern or developing world perspectives on global environmental problems.³³ Southern countries argue that many of the global environmental problems that Northern countries concern themselves with arise from activities associated with their development. Attempts to constrain the development of the South for the sake of the global environment are depicted as unfair. In addition to reflecting perceived tensions between environment and development this North-South debate is framed in terms of a tension between ecological sustainability and distributive equity. This tension is not inherent in all dimensions of ecological sustainability as issues of desertification, access to natural resources and local air and water quality remain salient for developing country governments and their societies. However, the North's focus on global commons issues like climate change, protection of the ozone layer, and biodiversity are less reflective of Southern priorities and they

32. Stafford and Hartman 1996.

33. Shiva 1997; Shiva 2000; Duwe 2001; Najam 2004; and Williams 2005.

often imply that the South must constrain its development and/or develop with a degree of environmental sensitivity that exceeds their existing capacity. The South's perspective on appropriate guiding principles of sustainable development can thus be viewed as an attempt to harmonize the values of sustainability and equity as well as one that seeks to reconcile sustainability with development objectives.³⁴ Especially important among these principles are common but differentiated responsibility, the polluter pays principle, the principle of additionality, and increased technical and financial aid and assistance in conjunction with any new commitments from developing countries.³⁵

Within the developed world equity concerns are rarely invoked to justify resistance to environmental reforms aside from those sectors that argue that the cost of such reforms fall disproportionately upon their shoulders. Instead, equity is often invoked as an important reason to undertake such reforms. One of the most salient movements in the ENGO community that places a dual emphasis on sustainability and equity is the environmental justice movement.³⁶ Environmental injustice is defined as the unfair distribution of environmental costs and is depicted as a form of social injustice. Societal groups that tend to bear the burden of environmental degradation are often poor and marginalized. Given that poor and marginalized groups often consist of ethnic minorities some within the environmental justice movement see environmental injustice as a form of racism.³⁷ Others within the movement do not see racism as an underlying cause but nonetheless concern themselves with the institutional processes that generate inequity in both the benefits of resource exploitation and the burdens of environmental degradation.³⁸

Whereas a substantial portion of the engager segment of the ENGO community seems to be embracing the harmonization of sustainability and efficiency to a greater or lesser extent, the same can be said for the confronter segment of the ENGO community with respect to harmonizing sustainability and equity concerns. On the radical side of the confronter segment of the ENGO community groups like Earth First!³⁹ and the Earth Liberation Front⁴⁰ clearly privilege ecological sustainability as their overriding objective. But they will adopt the rhetoric of social inequity when it suits their cause. Other groups like Environmental Rights Action, EcoEquity and organizations involved in the climate justice movement appear to base their mission on the harmonization of these twin values.⁴¹ Organizations in this latter group often target their activity against multilateral oil and gas corporations, as they perceive them to be the perpetrators and/or beneficiaries of environmental injustice.⁴² The Women's

34. Third World Network 2007.

35. Najam 2004.

36. Lester et al. 2001.

37. Bryant and Mohai 1992; and Bullard 1993.

38. Oxfam 2007.

39. Earth First! Journal 2008.

40. Pickering 2007.

41. Baer et al. 2007; and Oilwatch 2007.

42. Karliner 1997; and Oilwatch 2006.

Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) represents another variation of the sustainability-equity linkage. WEDO stresses the importance of gender equity and the role of women in crafting sustainable environmental policies.⁴³ Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth represent organizations with broad environmental mandates that have equity as a prominent or cross-cutting theme.⁴⁴ Within the engager segment of the ENGO community most organizations will acknowledge equity as a valid criterion even though they may or may not place as much emphasis on it as they do the criteria of sustainability and/or efficiency. Even Environmental Defense, with its strong emphasis on harmonizing sustainability and efficiency, lists equity as one of overarching goals of its mission.⁴⁵

Dual emphasis on the values of ecological sustainability and distributive equity are also reflected in the agendas of grassroots organizations that comprise the bulk of the NGO sector in the developing world. In a survey of literature on grassroots environmental organizations Gardner notes that these groups typically form in response to a threat to their resource base.⁴⁶ She notes that the fault lines of conflict are often based on race or class and pit local communities against international corporations and developing country officials and elites. Partnerships between these indigenous grassroots NGOs and international ENGOs lead to the type of transnational advocacy campaigns depicted by Keck and Sikkink.⁴⁷ The pressures these campaigns exert upon developing country governments produce an interesting irony. Developing country governments often portray themselves as the victims of North-South inequity in conflicts over global environmental governance while being portrayed as the perpetrators of inequity in conflicts over national and local environmental governance.

Similar to the way green alliances between ENGOs and the private sector portray environmental accountability as a component of corporate social responsibility, partnerships between ENGOs and broader-based social movements portray environmental equity and environmental rights as a subset of human rights; these are taken up in particular by the human rights and anti-globalization movements.⁴⁸

The discussion of the sustainability-efficiency and sustainability-equity interfaces is not meant to suggest that ENGOs and other interested actors do not seek to balance all three evaluative criteria in determining their policy preferences. Most profess concern for all of the criteria and many organizations explicitly include, or implicitly allude, to all of them in their mission statements.

43. Women's Environment and Development Organization 2008.

44. With respect to its core values Greenpeace states that "In developing our campaign strategies and policies we take great care to reflect our fundamental respect for democratic principles and to seek solutions that will promote global social equity." Greenpeace 2008. Friends of the Earth's emphasis on equity issues is more prominent in its vision and mission statement. Friends of the Earth 2008.

45. Environmental Defense 1999.

46. Gardner 1995.

47. Keck and Sikkink 1998.

48. See for example, Global Exchange 2008.

This is easier said than done, however, and few institutional strategies and/or policy remedies have made a persuasive claim to enhancing ecological sustainability, economic efficiency and distributive equity with equal vigor. Most contemporary governance trends are appealing to their advocates on account of their perceived ability to harmonize sustainability concerns with either efficiency or equity concerns, but not all three simultaneously. Resistance to these trends comes from those that feel they marginalize at least one of the three criteria.

Governance Approaches

The preceding section entertained a discussion of the values and criteria that underpin the policy goals of different segments of the ENGO community. This section will focus on divisions within the ENGO community with respect to preferred governance approaches. It will also highlight some discernable linkages between the core values espoused by particular segments of the ENGO community and their preferred approach.

The core value of ecological sustainability would appear to correspond most closely to preferences for strong state regulation bolstered by strong international regimes. However, growing dissatisfaction with the impotency of many international environmental regimes and attempts to harmonize ecological sustainability with other values are leading many ENGOs to consider or support alternative governance approaches. The clearest linkage exists along the sustainability-efficiency interface and its embrace of market mechanisms.⁴⁹ A looser affinity would appear to exist along the sustainability-equity interface and its support for decentralization and community empowerment.⁵⁰ The causal logics that underpin these affinities are conditional, however, as arguments can be made that each of the four governance approaches discussed below can hinder or advance any of the three values under a particular set of circumstances.

The State

Mancur Olsen's *The Logic of Collective Action* and Garrett Hardin's *Tragedy of the Commons* were landmark pieces of literature that established a basic tenet of collective action theory: the combination of externalities and individual rationality leads to suboptimal outcomes with respect to providing public goods and preserving common pool resources.⁵¹ Hardin's solution was mutually agreed coercion administered by the state, a solution that found additional support from Ophuls.⁵² Hardin and Ophuls' top-down, command-and-control approach has

49. World Bank 2003.

50. World Resources Institute 2003; Scheberle 2004; and World Bank 2005.

51. Olsen 1965; and Hardin 1968.

52. Ophuls 1977.

since been the traditional default solution to environmental problems. Many ENGOs have a successful history with their advocacy for national legislation that has authorized the state to elevate pollution standards, protect wildlife and manage natural resources. More recently, however, the state has come under attack from various quarters. Arguments are being put forth that all three of the aforementioned values (ecological sustainability, economic efficiency, distributive equity) would be better served by alternative institutional arrangements. The proposed alternatives can be depicted along two dimensions. A horizontal dimension highlights a market-oriented approach that calls for less administrative control and greater reliance on market mechanisms. A vertical dimension highlights a top-down approach that calls for the ceding of authority to international regimes as well as a bottom-up approach calling for devolution of authority away from the state down to lower levels of government.

Embracing the Market

The sustainability-efficiency interface discussion is directly linked to an increased emphasis on markets as an alternative to central government administration. Its proponents portray an increased market-orientation as an effective means to achieve ecological sustainability in concert with economic efficiency.⁵³

The sustainability-efficiency interface discussion covered a range of the institutional reforms that reflect market logic. Evaluating alternative regulatory tools on the basis of their cost and efficiency is a popular principle in segments of the ENGO community that seek to harmonize ecological sustainability with economic efficiency. Internalizing externalities through taxes and subsidies is also consistent with the logic of correcting for market failures and inappropriate price signals that lead to environmental degradation.⁵⁴ In practice, free market proponents often resist taxes and subsidies as they are widely perceived to be market-distorting.⁵⁵ Tradable permit schemes and privatization initiatives are highly popular among free-market environmentalists, but they tend to garner the least support within the ENGO community (especially privatization).

ENGO concerns about privatization focus on distributive equity and to a lesser extent ecological sustainability.⁵⁶ Creating exclusive, compensable property rights in natural resource domains can create strong incentives for better stewardship and more efficient resource use. However, privatization limits public access to ecosystem services and often concentrates the economic rents that result from resource exploitation in the hands of property owners. The end re-

53. Although the fervor with which some free-market proponents embrace property rights and markets call into question whether they consider them means to an end or an end in and of themselves.

54. World Bank 2003.

55. At issue is whether a status quo market outcome is viewed to be a market failure in need of correction or a natural market outcome that is distorted by efforts to internalize externalities. Technically, the former argument is often correct.

56. Ulrich von Weizsacker et al. 2006.

sult can be more efficient resource management that enriches a small group of private actors while marginalizing large portions of the public that depend upon ecosystem services for their survival. Also, when property rights are defined in a manner that fails to internalize the full range of social costs associated with ecosystem degradation then they can create perverse incentives that result from increasing the value of some ecosystem services at the expense of others. These perverse incentives can be exacerbated by the low discount rates and short time horizons that are common for the capital-intensive, mobile segments of resource extraction industries that are most capable of purchasing property rights in an unrestricted market.⁵⁷

Finally, the related issues of certification and ecolabeling reflect a greater emphasis on markets for achieving environmental objectives. Both practices seek to provide consumers with more information on the ecological sustainability of a given commodity and its associated production processes. Rather than rely on state authorities to mandate or regulate private sector activity, the logic of these practices suggest that greater leverage can be applied to the behavior of firms via the purchasing practices of informed consumers. Sustainable practices are rewarded and unsustainable ones punished through price signals and market shares. There is widespread endorsement for these certification schemes in principle. In practice, however, a number of implementation issues generate controversy within and across the ENGO community, the private sector and governments. These include the most appropriate entities for certifying industry practices, certification standards, certification costs and the resolution of potential conflicts between certification standards and World Trade Organization rules.⁵⁸

International Regimes: A Top-Down Approach

Locating authority in international regimes reflects a shift in focus to environmental problems that are global in scope. Much of the same logic in state-centered solutions to environmental problems applies. When an environmental problem is contained within national boundaries the state is naturally looked upon as the entity with the incentive and means to fix the problem. If the causes and consequences of environmental degradation span the boundaries of multiple states, then this logic suggests that an overarching authority be created to address the problem.⁵⁹ As a substantial portion of the ENGO community has turned its attention to regional and global commons problems that include transboundary air pollution, regional fish stocks, climate change, ozone depletion, and the loss of biodiversity, a groundswell of international regimes has arisen.⁶⁰ But with a few notable exceptions like the Montreal Protocol and the

57. Alcock 2003.

58. Gereffi et al. 1995; Gudmundsson and Wessels 2000; and Fischer et al 2005.

59. Bryner 2004.

60. Taylor 2001; Soroos 2004; and Chasek et al. 2006.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the agreements that underpin most international environmental regimes have lacked depth.⁶¹ And some scholars have argued that the few successful international environmental regimes that we do observe can best be accounted for by coercive tactics on the part of powerful countries.⁶²

Despite the slow progress of building effective international regimes at the global level, European countries have placed a considerable amount of rule-making authority on a number of environmental policies above the state within European Union governance institutions. The pace of progressive environmental policymaking has slowed during the last decade in the face of compliance issues, economic stagnation, EU enlargement and appeals to the subsidiarity principle. But the overall trend in the EU demonstrates significant progress in terms of harmonizing and strengthening environmental regulations throughout the region.⁶³ The EU remains the leader in global environmental governance both in terms of its internal institutions as well as its advocacy for international regimes.

Most of the mainstream ENGOs that focus on global environmental problems appear supportive of strengthening international regimes and empowering intergovernmental organizations with environmental mandates. Given the increased access and influence ENGOs have realized within the EU institutional structure it should come as no surprise that many would like to replicate the EU experience on a global level. But progress at the global level remains elusive. While support for a top-down approach persists among a number of traditional ENGOs that privilege the value of ecological sustainability above all else, a fair number of these same groups appear to be open to alternative approaches for the sake of efficacy alone.⁶⁴ Perhaps more importantly, however, few ENGOs appear to stress a top-down approach as an effective means of promoting the values of efficiency and equity. Instead these groups work to infuse efficiency and equity into the terms of a given international regime through their advocacy efforts.

Decentralization: A Bottom-Up Approach

The argument for devolving authority down to local levels of governance is based on a variety of claims that emphasize equity, legitimacy, and efficacy. Elinor Ostrom's *Governing the Commons* has served as rallying cry for a cadre of academic scholars that challenge Hardin's claim that an overarching authority in the form of a state administrator is a necessary condition for effective management of a common-pool resource.⁶⁵ Commons scholars have provided both

61. Downs et al. 1996; and Downie 2004.

62. Steinberg 2006.

63. Axelrod, Vig, and Schreurs 2004.

64. Wapner 1996.

65. Ostrom 1990.

theoretical and empirical support for the claim that communities can form self-governing institutions that effectively manage resources under certain conditions.⁶⁶ Conditions conducive to effective commons management typically include rules that are perceived as equitable, legitimate and consistent with the broader institutional structure in which they are embedded.

The commons literature is one component of a broader movement among academics and policymakers advocating bottom-up approaches to governance. Ostrom's work emphasizes self-governance within a community of resource users in the absence of an overarching authority. Other bottom-up approaches include notions of co-management (where decision-making authority is shared between resource users and government officials) and more generic notions of decentralization (where decision-making authority is devolved to a lower-level authority regardless of whether the authoritative entity is a resource user or sub-state government officials).⁶⁷ All of these approaches are critical of top-down, command and control systems of environmental regulation. Top-down approaches administered by central governments are said to disrupt local institutional processes, create disjunctures between governance decisions and their impacts, marginalize specific socioeconomic groups (typically the poor and disenfranchised) and lead to outcomes that local communities perceive to be inequitable.⁶⁸

In developing countries the above concerns are often invoked by grassroots NGOs in their demand for greater decision-making authority over natural resource management issues. Greater equity in terms of procedural fairness and substantive outcomes (socioeconomic as well as ecological) is a core demand for such groups. To a significant extent national governments are accommodating these demands. The World Resource Institute notes that 63 out of 75 developing or transitioning countries with populations over 5 million indicate that they are undergoing some form of decentralization.⁶⁹ Importantly, the role most often played by ENGOs in developing country devolution initiatives is not one of advocacy but rather one of building capacity and providing services in lieu of the state.⁷⁰ Developing country ENGOs are implementers of decentralization as much as they are advocates for it.

Decentralization is also a popular theme in American politics. Taking power away from Washington and giving it back to states and local communities is a staple of conservative political discourse that has made substantial inroads into the political agendas of moderates and some liberals as well. The discourse resonates not so much because of perceived inequities in federal regulations, but rather because of a general endorsement of the principle of subsidiarity, or allowing governance functions to be carried out at the lowest

66. Ostrom et al. 2002.

67. Scheberle 2004.

68. Dryzek 2001; Agarwal and Goyal 2001; and Ribot 2004.

69. World Resources Institute 2003.

70. Gardner 1995; Mirafab 1997; Mercer 2002; and World Resources Institute 2003.

level that they can be effectively enforced. Local discretion is widely perceived as a more legitimate and effective means of governance than rules imposed from outside authorities.

To date it would appear that ENGO perspectives on decentralization within the US are cautious. ENGOs within the environmental justice movement with ties to local grassroots organizations are likely to applaud reforms that empower local communities in a manner that allows them to ward off environmental threats, remediate past environmental damage and/or hold accountable those who are responsible for it. However, state and local government officials are sometimes less likely to privilege principles of social justice and environmental equity than their federal counterparts and it is quite possible that the indiscriminate decentralization of federal power in the US could exacerbate local inequities as much as it ameliorates them. American history is replete with examples of state and local government resistance to federal legislation seeking to advance environmental and/or social justice causes. And US federal environmental regulations are often more stringent than state and county preferences. As such, it would appear that US ENGOs that target national legislation in the advocacy campaigns currently defend against efforts to repeal existing federal regulations with environmental implications more often than they seek to decentralize regulatory functions in order to advance their objectives.

Conflicts and Coalitions on the Issue of Climate Change

The values-governance framework outlined above helps to illuminate salient dimensions of political debates within the ENGO community that other frameworks seem to miss. Climate change, the premier environmental issue of our current generation, provides a useful example. On the surface it appears that conflicts and coalitions on the climate change issue are consistent with conventional wisdom. The primary fault line seems to lie between ENGOs and industry with a division within the ENGO community between mainstream ENGOs seeking to constructively engage negotiations on governance institutions through the Climate Action Network (CAN) and more confrontational ENGOs affiliated with the climate justice movement that rely on direct action. Upon closer inspection of ENGO positions, however, tensions can be observed over the values of sustainability, efficiency and equity and, perhaps more importantly, disagreement over the most appropriate governance approaches for realizing these values.

CAN is a worldwide network of 340 NGOs “working to promote government and individual action to limit human-induced climate change to ecologically sustainable levels.”⁷¹ CAN is organized around 13 regional networks and includes a majority of the world’s ENGOs with active climate change campaigns. Pulver suggests that CAN’s strategy is largely directed by three major

71. Climate Action Network 2008.

NGOs (Greenpeace, FOE and WWF).⁷² Since it was established in 1989 CAN has been actively monitoring and seeking to influence the climate negotiations as well as climate-related policies and measures at the national and international levels. CAN was influential in the negotiations that led to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol and has been an ardent supporter of the latter ever since.

Until its dissolution in 2002, CAN's primary archrival was the Global Climate Coalition (GCC), a Washington-based lobby group with close ties to the fossil fuel industry. In contrast to CAN, the GCC was a staunch critic to the Kyoto Protocol. The GCC engaged in an aggressive disinformation campaign during the Clinton and Bush Administrations that sought to discredit the science behind the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and prevent US participation in the regime. The GCC disbanded in 2002 claiming that its goals were largely met with the Bush Administration's withdrawal of the US as a party to the Kyoto Protocol.

The lone segment of the ENGO community that engages in campaigns related to climate change but is not a part of CAN and does not support Kyoto is a loose network of 100 or so organizations that Pulver associates with the climate justice movement.⁷³ Prominent in this latter group of ENGOs are a US-based network known as CorpWatch, an Ecuador-based network called Oilwatch, the Rainforest Action Network and the Third World Network. Relationships between these organizations and CAN tend to be congenial if not supportive as two of the leading organizational leaders of CAN (Greenpeace and FOE) have informal ties to climate justice groups.

However, these distinctions may actually obscure more salient conflicts and coalitions over values and governance approaches that fail to map neatly onto a CAN vs. climate justice or CAN vs. industry dichotomy. With respect to harmonizing sustainability and equity, there has long been a rift within CAN between Northern and Southern ENGOs regarding the balance of climate responsibility and associated Kyoto commitments. These concerns mirror those of the climate justice movement and the level of support for Kyoto among some Southern CAN members might be considered tepid at best.⁷⁴

A rift can also be observed between some former and current members and a number of corporate firms, including oil companies. Environmental Defense played a pivotal role in facilitating international scientific negotiations on climate change in the late 1980s and it is credited as one of the founders of CAN.⁷⁵ As the intergovernmental negotiations evolved toward Kyoto tensions arose between Environmental Defense and the rest of the CAN leaders. Environmental Defense pushed heavily for a market-oriented Protocol framework with economic efficiency serving as one of the primary evaluative criteria for consid-

72. Pulver 2004.

73. Pulver 2004.

74. Duwe 2001.

75. Betsill 2000.

ering alternative Protocol options. In particular, Environmental Defense advocated for the liberal usage of an emissions trading regime that it helped to design. CAN leaders, especially the Europe based ENGOs, maintained their emphasis on ecological sustainability and argued for a principle of supplementarity in which nations would only use the emissions trading regime as a supplement to substantive measures taken to reduce emissions within their borders. Environmental Defense exacerbated these tensions in 1997 when it agreed to partner with British Petroleum (BP) to create an internal emissions trading system within the oil company. This initial partnership has since developed into the Partnership for Climate Action, a consortium of ten major corporations who have all pledged to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from the respective facilities. The dispute over what many CAN members perceive to be the privileging of economic efficiency as a primary value and Environmental Defense's market-orientation ultimately resulted in the latter's withdrawal from CAN.⁷⁶

In addition to the market push driven by efficiency goals and the decentralization pull driven by equity concerns, some academics have expressed concerns about efficacy. David Victor has criticized the top-down approach to global environmental cooperation embodied within the Kyoto Protocol and instead proposes a bottom-up, Madisonian approach to building a global regime.⁷⁷ Victor's argument draws on insights from academic literature on international cooperation to highlight a number of unresolved bargaining issues that have significant distributive implications, as well as the historical inability of international regimes to ensure compliance with costly commitments. In short, Victor does not think the Kyoto Protocol can overcome its unresolved bargaining and enforcement problems. His alternative approach draws analogies to building currency markets and argues that credible institutions must first emerge within states before an effective trading regime can be developed that links them together. Victor does not call for the wholesale dismantling of Kyoto, but instead suggests salvaging the parts that work while focusing on building the institutional foundations for a successor regime.

To date few if any ENGOs have embraced Victor's approach but it would not be surprising to see segments of the ENGO community adopt portions of it. Much of its market construction logic is consistent with attempts to harmonize the values of sustainability and efficiency. And Victor's championing of local and regional innovation should resonate well with grassroots ENGOs and green business alliances in the US. Internationally, Victor's approach does not provide developing countries with promises of aid and investment or an emissions windfall, but it calls for collaboration with them on their terms and it does not impose any constraints. While this does little to rectify past North-South inequities, it refrains from saddling the latter with unfair commitments. And it leaves

76. Pulver 2004.

77. Victor 2001; Victor 2004; and Victor 2005. Victor uses the term Madisonian by analogy with the "messy federalism" that James Madison embraced in the United States Constitution.

open the possibility of incorporating developing countries into a global climate regime after carbon markets in developed countries achieve a threshold level of maturity. However, even if a significant component of the ENGO community were to accept the logic of a bottom-up, market-oriented approach for reconstructing a climate change regime, it remains quite likely that a substantial number of committed CAN members would resist. With respect to the criterion of ecological sustainability, the Madisonian approach may appear to fall short of what these groups hope the post-Kyoto Protocol can eventually deliver.

When applied to the climate change issue, the values-governance framework draws our attention to tensions and conflicts that might be overlooked when thinking in terms of CAN (environmental groups) vs. the GCC and its progeny (industry groups) or CAN (insiders) vs. the climate justice movement (outsiders). The most relevant tensions involve reconciling the values of ecological sustainability (in the form of climate stability) with economic efficiency and distributive equity at domestic and international levels. As the nations of the world begin to seriously negotiate Kyoto's successor regime the most important debates may very well center on alternative governance approaches that pit top-down vs. bottom-up logics for institutional development with varying degrees of emphasis on market mechanisms. And we should not be surprised if the most salient coalitions emerge in a manner that cuts across traditional ENGO and industry characterizations.

Looking Ahead

Parochial approaches to environmental goals are becoming less politically viable.⁷⁸ Different segments of the ENGO community are building bridges in the quest to harmonize the value of ecological sustainability with economic efficiency or distributive equity. It seems likely that ENGO coalitions emphasizing the sustainability-efficiency or sustainability-equity interfaces will overshadow those that place an equal emphasis on all three values. This is because the most likely bridges between the ENGO community and other socioeconomic interest groups are those that connect ENGOs to groups that are relatively insensitive to one of the three values. Coalitions that focus on the sustainability-efficiency interface tend to neglect the issue of distributive equity, while coalitions that focus on the sustainability-equity interface tend to neglect the issue of economic efficiency. This does not preclude attempts to balance all three values but simply makes it difficult to do.

If a more unified attempt to balance all three values occurs within the ENGO community, this analysis suggests that its best chances lie in a combination of decentralization and market-oriented reforms. With respect to governance approaches it would appear that the trends toward market-orientation and decentralization have the greatest momentum. The trend toward embracing

78. Schellenberger and Nordhaus 2007.

markets is the preferred institutional approach for groups that privilege economic efficiency. The trend toward decentralization is popular for groups that privilege equity although it is important to note that decentralization by no means assures greater equity.⁷⁹ Still, decentralization initiatives such as land tenure reforms, co-management arrangements and investment in local capacity all hold the potential to enhance equity. Such initiatives can be implemented in concert with a broader set of market-based initiatives giving rise to the possibility of combining alternative governance approaches in a manner that balances the three values.

Importantly, embracing markets and devolving authority away from the central government are themes that have considerable political resonance in the United States. This will likely affect the form of future US environmental regulation as well as the US's disposition toward international environmental regimes.⁸⁰ If the US is to seriously reengage the international community on its global environmental agenda, it will likely occur under the auspices of a bottom-up, market-oriented approach. An increasing number of US-based ENGOs would likely endorse such an approach as a matter of political pragmatism if not a genuine belief that it offers the most effective governance solutions. But a significant portion of the US-based ENGO community will likely resist due to their preference for strong environmental regulations that are codified in law at the highest level of authority possible. The EU and EU-based ENGOs will also likely resist due their growing comfort level with top-down approaches and their desire to replicate this approach at the international level.

A unified alliance of ENGOs pushing for environmentally progressive policies will be less discernable as a cohesive advocacy group in the future battle over global environmental governance. Fault lines of conflict will reflect tensions among ENGOs and a broad range of coalition partners regarding what values should be privileged and the most appropriate governance approach to achieve them.

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79. The World Resources Institute's 2002 discussion of decentralization notes a number of conditions under which decentralization can exacerbate inequity. See also Scheberle 2004.

80. DeSombre 2004.

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