Facing South?

The British Environmental Movement
and
the Challenge of Globalization

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Even as the processes of economic and cultural globalization have become apparently irresistible, so the institutions and policies that promote them have been increasingly contested. In the course of the past decade, we have witnessed the rise of a remarkable constellation of groups, campaigns and protests drawing attention to and demanding remediation of the most unambiguously malign consequences of globalization, from the indebtedness of the poorest states and the emiseration of their citizens to the degradation of the global environment.

However, although ‘anti-globalization’ protests against international or supranational institutions such as the WTO, World Bank, and EU have often raised environmental issues, they have not been primarily environmental protests. Although environmental movement organizations (EMOs) have often publicly sympathized with the critique of those institutions, they have not generally been prominently involved in the protests.

Environmental issues are increasingly recognized as transnational issues, but the transnationalism of environmental movements remains problematic. To understand the obstacles to and the prospects for a global, or merely genuinely transnational, environmental movement, it is instructive to examine developments within national movements as they attempt to address the challenges of globalization and come to terms with new opportunities for transnational action.

This paper examines changes in the key constituents of the British environmental movement as they respond to increasing awareness of the connections between global environmental degradation and the unequal distribution of the means of human existence and well-being, the growing importance of transnational economic and political institutions, and the challenge of new movements that contest those institutions. I shall focus, in particular, upon the efforts of British environmental organizations to come to terms with a transnational agenda focused upon issues of development in what used to be called the Third World and what is now more often, but inaccurately, called the ‘global South’, and what is increasingly called the ‘global justice movement’ (GJM).

However much environmental movement organizations (EMOs) might come to think globally, they are constrained to act locally. In order to understand some of the variation in the responses of EMOs to the challenges of globalization and the new agenda of global justice, we need to understand the strategic dilemmas that confront them and the constraints upon their actions. We all, inevitably, tend to see environmental issues through the prisms of our own experience, and our own experience is, inevitably, structured by the peculiarities of national cultures and institutions. For that reason, it is useful to consider the obstacles that exist to the development of global perspectives and truly transnational environmental movements even in relatively favourable circumstances.

1. The Transnationalization of Environmentalism in Europe

Despite claims that the increased number of NGOs operating on a transnational basis is a sign of the emergence of a global civil society, political action is still shaped by the opportunities offered and constraints imposed by political institutions. There is as yet no global polity analogous to that of the nation-state, and the international institutions that have so far been constructed are almost always just that – inter-national. Transnational groups may, as Tarrow...
(2001a:246-7) suggests, ‘organize [around] international institutions, which serve as sources of group claims, as targets for their protests, and as sites that can bring parallel groups together internationally’, but the pattern of action adopted by transnational NGOs is, in consequence, an adaptation to an international political milieu dominated by inter-governmental negotiations and agreements.

To dispel illusions that the establishment of formal political institutions on a truly global scale would simply or quickly remove all obstacles to the development of global social movements, it is instructive to consider the experience of the environmental movement in the relatively favorable circumstances of the most highly developed existing supra-national polity that yet exists – the EU. Despite the development and increasing powers of EU institutions, especially with regard to environmental policy, their impact upon national environmental movements has been quite modest. In each of the three elements essential to the identification of an environmental movement – networks, engagement in collective action, and shared concern (Rootes, 1997:326, cf. Diani, 1992) – the transnationalization of environmentalism within the EU is at best limited.

1.1. Networks

New, pan-European organizations formed in response to the European Commission’s (EC) increasing interest in environmental policy. The EC’s growing environmental competence emphasized the need for transnational organization, and the founders of the new groups recognized that, so long as it was ad hoc, effective cross-national collaboration between environmental campaigners was rare. If the EC increased the need, it also provided the opportunity. Following its first Environmental Action Programme, the EC, in pursuit of its desire to promote a broadly representative forum bringing together environmentalists from across Europe, in 1974 provided financial assistance for the formation of the European Environmental Bureau (EEB). 1

Other, more specialized networks subsequently established representation in Brussels, both because they recognized the efficiency of concentrating their European lobbying activities in one place, and because they saw the EC as a more important producer of environmental policy than any EU member state. Thus Friends of the Earth (FoE) established a Brussels office in 1985, followed by Climate Action Network (CAN) in 1989.

Because the EC is a bureaucracy with a relatively small staff, it has sought, even more urgently than national governments, to limit the number of interlocutors with which it deals. In order to accommodate its preference for dealing with a single peak organization broadly representative of the environmental movement, a ‘super umbrella’ network was formed. Initially comprising the EEB, FoE, Greenpeace, and WWF, the ‘gang of four’ has become Green-8, which now also includes CAN Europe, the European Federation for Transport and the Environment, Friends of Nature International, and Birdlife International.

Nevertheless, within the EU, the transnational networking of environmental groups is more limited than might be supposed. At first glance, British EMOs are relatively well embedded in European networks: the EEB counts more member organizations from Britain than from any other country, and British-based organizations played prominent roles in the formation of other European environmental networks. However, a 1998 survey of the European links of British EMOs found that although four-fifths of the thirty groups surveyed claimed membership in a European network, twenty different networks were mentioned. One in three claimed
membership in the EEB, but most saw it only as a vehicle for the exchange of information (Ward and Lowe, 1998).

A more extensive survey of British environmental groups, undertaken as part of the Transformation of Environmental Activism (TEA) project, produced similar results. Of 117 national-level EMOs surveyed in 1999-2000, only 32 claimed even to have exchanged information with the EEB during the previous twelve months, and only 10 claimed to have collaborated in a campaign with the EEB (see Rootes 2005 for details). True, the organizations most often nominated as recent interlocutors or partners were the transnationally-oriented FoE, WWF, and Greenpeace, but these references were almost certainly to the British national organizations of these EMOs rather than their transnational operations. Indeed, the small and thematically specialized Council (now ‘Campaign’) for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE), which operates within only one of the nations of the UK, was nominated far more often than any unambiguously transnational EMO. Moreover, in response to an open-ended question asking representatives of British EMOs to name their most important collaborators, of a total of 232 nominations the EC/EU was mentioned only twice, and not a single European EMO or network was named (Rootes and Miller, 2000). These modest numbers are not a reflection of a peculiarly British lack of enthusiasm for European collaboration. Similar surveys in the six other states covered by the TEA project suggest that EMOs elsewhere in the EU were scarcely more active in European networks than their British counterparts.

Transnational environmental movement networks within the EU are, then, neither very dense nor very active. Most are highly specialized, and most EMOs remain primarily oriented toward national rather than European arenas. Cross-nationally collaborative action tends to be confined to the larger multi-national organizations such as FoE (Ward and Lowe, 1998:162) and the transnational Greenpeace. Otherwise, EMOs appear to prefer to operate within the familiar milieu of national politics. There are good reasons for this.

Scarcity of resources is a major constraint upon collaboration among European EMOs. Because their constituencies – and, hence, their resource bases – are mostly at the national level, most EMOs focus upon maintaining or strengthening their national organizations rather than providing the substantial resources required by disproportionately expensive organization at the European level.

Another obstacle is the persistence of national differences. EMOs depend for their legitimacy and resources upon their ability to command public support and, in the absence of a European public sphere, they must respond to public opinion at national level. EMOs in smaller states with less highly developed national environmental movements may look more often to the European level, but none has convincingly escaped the long shadows of national institutions, cultures, and patterns of action (Long, 1998:117).

1.2. Collective action
Although environmentalists have staged transnational demonstrations in Brussels or Strasbourg and at recent EC summits, the great majority of environmental protests in the EU have taken place within nation-states, have addressed national or local issues, and have been focused upon national or local targets. Of all the environmental protests reported in a leading national newspaper in each of Britain, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain, and Sweden during the ten years 1988-1997, only very small numbers were European in their level of mobilization, the scope of the underlying issues, or their targets (Rootes, 2003b; 2003c). There was no evidence from any of these countries of a trend toward transnationalization.
The development of the EU has created new opportunities, but EU institutions do not encourage deployment of all the strategies and tactics customarily adopted by EMOs to influence national governments. The European Parliament has until very recently been a toothless forum largely invisible to the European public, while the Council of Ministers consists of delegates of national governments whose positions have been prepared in advance and at home. As a result, where channels of communication to national governments are relatively open, it makes more sense to direct action at targets closer to home.

Moreover, even if environmental policy is now largely made at the EU level, its implementation is still national and local. A great deal of environmental movement action is focused not upon policy-making, but upon the ways in which, and the sites at which, policy is implemented. Most national EMOs are conscious that their vitality depends upon maintaining involvement with domestic concerns (Rootes, 2003d), and so local and national issues and arenas remain crucial to them.

Even if national governments appear increasingly to be mere agents of the EC, environmental activists tend to mobilize against those local tokens of European power rather than against the EC itself (cf. Imig and Tarrow, 2001). By comparison with the institutions of nation-states, EU institutions are remote and inaccessible. But national and local targets may be tactically appropriate as well as accessible. Even mobilizations restricted to the national – or the local – level have the power to disrupt EC-favored projects and thereby to alert the EC to the issues in contention. Moreover, to the extent that such protests put pressure on national governments, they may tip the balance within the Council of Ministers and thus determine European policy.

In the 1980s, British EMOs appeared more active in European arenas than their German counterparts, principally because, with unresponsive governments at home, British EMOs sought to increase their leverage by appeals to European institutions (Dalton, 1994; Ward and Lowe, 1998:156). The greater responsiveness of British governments since the early 1990s has meant that action at the European level has appeared less necessary. A preference for action within nation-states is not, however, simply a rational response to the pattern of opportunities. Comparison of the orientations of British and German EMOs toward European arenas suggests that habits of action learned at the national level are so deeply ingrained that EMOs are disinclined to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to operate effectively on the European stage (Roose, 2003a; 2003b).

1.3. Shared Concerns
If evidence of organization and collective action at the EU level is slight, Europeanization may nevertheless take the form of common issues among the various national movements and mass publics. Research from the 1980s revealed considerable differences in the conceptions of environmental problems among Europeans and showed how these were reflected in the policies and actions of national EMOs (Dalton, 1994). Surveys demonstrated that, although large majorities of people everywhere in the EU professed concern about the environment, environmental concern in southern Europe was more often than in the North expressed as ‘personal complaint’ (Hofrichter and Reif, 1990).

The pattern of issues raised in environmental protests from 1988-1997 in the seven EU states covered by the TEA project confirms this pattern. Pollution and the effects of environmental degradation upon human health were more frequently raised in Italy, Spain, and Greece than in northern Europe. More surprising, however, was the diversity of issues raised in
the four northern European countries. In Britain and Sweden, protests were relatively evenly spread among transport, animal rights, nature conservation, pollution, and urban/industrial issues. In France, however, protests concerning nature protection and, especially, animal welfare were relatively rarely reported, and in Germany over half of all reported protests involved nuclear energy, an issue rarely raised elsewhere. Not only was there no common pattern, but there was no trend toward transnational convergence (Rootes, 2003c).

Viewed in the aggregate, environmentalism in Europe evidently remains more strongly shaped by national circumstances than by European institutions. The fact that the obstacles to the transnationalization of perspectives, networks and action are so apparent even within the EU suggests that they will be greater still when we consider the global arena, since even the political institutions that act as lures to and constraints upon common perspectives and forms of action are much less well developed globally than they are within the EU.

2. The transnationalization of British EMOs

Nevertheless, if we focus upon the leading actors within the British environmental movement, there is evidence that they have, in varying degree, taken increasingly seriously global agenda and, however, tentatively, the perspectives of the global South.

The EMOs that appear from our survey of 117 national groups (Rootes and Miller, 2000) to constitute the core of the network that is the British environmental movement are, in order of the frequency by which they were named as important collaborators or sources of information by others in the network: Friends of the Earth (FoE) (18 nominations), the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) (11), Greenpeace (10), Wildlife and Countryside Link (8), the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) (7), and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) (6).

In order to put these organizations in perspective, Table 1 presents some basic information about these and other large environmental organizations.

[Table 1 about here]

Interestingly, the three EMOs most central to the network are all part of (variously organized) trans- or inter-national organizations. Moreover, all three are listed among the 1,600 members of OneWorld, the online civil society network established in 1995, whose vision is an ‘equitable and sustainable distribution of wealth amongst the world's population, underpinned by global attainment and protection of human rights and by governance structures which permit local communities control over their own affairs’ (www.oneworld.net, accessed 31.3.2005).

If their membership of OneWorld suggests that all three are fully signed up to the global justice project, they differ in the prominence they accord to it. FoE displays a link to the OneWorld site on its web page, but there was not so much as a mention of OneWorld on the websites of WWF-UK or Greenpeace in June 2003 or in March 2005. Indeed, the Greenpeace UK website, which highlighted ‘priority campaigns’ to stop climate change by choosing clean energy, defend oceans and save ancient forests, gave the impression of Greenpeace as a thematically conventional conservation organization. Third level links for ‘world development’ on the Greenpeace UK website do not mention OneWorld, but do include a range of aid and development NGOs (ActionAid, Amnesty International,
Intermediate Technology [ITDG], Oxfam, Survival International, and the World Development Movement). Nevertheless, Greenpeace, unlike FoE, WWF, or even RSPB, does not use the language of sustainability and makes no explicit reference to social justice issues in the global South.

If the agenda of Greenpeace appears remarkably unchanged, FoE and WWF, by contrast, now present themselves as organizations as much concerned with global justice as with the conservation of endangered species and habitats. Some of the changes in British EMOs are attributable to changes in the contexts within which they operate. But many – including some that have considerable implications for their transnational aspirations, links, and actions – are largely endogenous. I shall consider here the development of their agenda, their external institutionalization, and the enduringly problematic relationship between national EMOs and their local members, supporters, and wider public constituencies, before concluding by attempting to explain why the three leading British EMOs should have developed so differently and should now appear so differently related to the GJM.

2.1. Broadening agenda
One of the most striking ways in which British EMOs have changed is in the expansion of their agenda, most conspicuously, but not exclusively, to issues of transnational significance. The older conservation organizations have embraced biodiversity and, to varying degrees, sustainable development, and, in some cases, the resulting transnational linkages. FoE, however, has extended its agenda to issues of social justice, both transnationally and domestically. The broadening of EMOs’ agendas extends, then, not only to other environmental issues, but also beyond what have conventionally been considered environmental issues.

A major stimulus to new thinking in established conservation organizations was the dramatic rise during the 1980s of the new campaigning EMOs – FoE and Greenpeace – and the emergence of informal networks and ad hoc campaign alliances. This was not entirely new: from the very beginnings of environmentalism in Britain, there has been a large measure of cooperation among EMOs, as well as recognition of a specialized division of labor (Lowe and Goyder 1983). Nevertheless, inter-organizational influences grew in the 1980s and 1990s due to increased networking and the formation of national and international umbrella groups. This appears to have diffused among quite different groups a new shared concern, grounded in a more systemic analysis of the sources of environmental ills. All now speak the language of sustainability and/or biodiversity. FoE, Greenpeace and WWF all recognize, albeit in differing ways or employing different language, the contributions of transnational capital and markets to ecological degradation, and RSPB has been increasingly prepared to examine the social forces that affect wildlife habitats. The emergence of smaller groups concerned with the conservation of single species encouraged WWF to see its role as complementary to those of other organizations. Thus WWF has assisted other, more activist groups, donating money towards the purchase of Greenpeace’s first ship, and helping to fund some anti-roads protests in the 1990s (Rawcliffe 1998:138). Capitalizing upon the agenda-setting actions of more radical groups, WWF has been able to present itself as the reasonable voice of positive and practical environmentalism, and has enjoyed excellent standing with governments.5

The exchanges among British EMOs are not only interorganizational. As the voluntary sector in Britain has developed, campaigning has emerged as a professional career; there are increasingly frequent movements of personnel, even at the most senior levels, among EMOs and between EMOs and other non-profit organizations in fields such as civil and welfare rights, and
international aid and development. These developments tend to smooth interaction among EMOs and facilitate an effective division of labor. They also improve the linkages between the environmental movement and other actors in both public and private sectors, maximizing the possibilities for EMOs to efficiently and effectively influence the formation and implementation of public and corporate policy, but also enhancing the understanding within EMOs of, for example, issues of human rights, trade and development.

However, although conservation organizations have certainly developed in the context of communication within an enlarged and transformed environmental movement, ecology as a discipline has developed in tandem with the environmental movement; it is not simply or mainly a product of that movement. The drift from old-style conservationism reflects the development of scientific understanding of ecology at least as much as contact, collaboration or competition with newer, more radical EMOs.

Thus RSPB, the oldest British conservation organization, has become more transnational as a consequence of increasing knowledge and more sophisticated understanding of the implications of its relatively narrow issue focus upon birds and their habitat. Recognizing that there was little point in putting great effort into conservation projects in the UK if key habitats were being destroyed along important migratory routes elsewhere, RSPB was instrumental in establishing BirdLife International in 1992, and supports BirdLife and its European partners by more than GBP 1 million per year. Not least through its activities in BirdLife, RSPB has evolved from a strictly national bird protection organization into one increasingly concerned with global environmental change, and was keenly involved with the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. In June 2003, in addition to opposing a mooted airport on the North Kent marshes, an important habitat for migratory wading birds, RSPB’s headline campaigns included reform of the EC’s Common Agricultural Policy, the protection of marine life, support for tough new EC proposals to impose upon polluters the costs of clean-up, and the promotion of solar energy. By contrast, however, its web site in 2005 (accessed 29.3.05) appears to have returned to a narrow if not entirely exclusive focus upon birds. Still sporting the slogan ‘for birds, for people, for ever’, RSPB now describes itself as ‘the UK charity working to secure a healthy environment for birds and wildlife, helping to create a better world for us all.’

2.1.1. WWF

The transformation in the agenda of WWF has been altogether more profound. By the end of the 1970s, WWF had already evolved from a small organization focused on endangered species and habitat destruction into an international EMO concerned with conservation of biodiversity generally. In 1980, WWF expanded its agenda to embrace development issues and first introduced the term ‘sustainable development’ (Denton 1993). In 1986, in order to reflect the wider scope of its activities, it changed its name from World Wildlife Fund to the World Wide Fund for Nature.

As a direct result of the UNCED process and the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, WWF widened its ambit to work with other NGOs to form a common agenda on development and environment. In 1993, with Action Aid, CAFOD, Oxfam, Christian Aid, Save the Children and FoE, it produced a report calling for fundamental changes in foreign and domestic aid policy (Rawcliffe 1998: 217).

Always transnational in the scope of its organization and the geographical range of its activities, but nervous about alienating traditional supporters, in 1998 WWF undertook a
‘corporate review’ that included a survey of public and other audience perceptions. To WWF’s surprise,
… our audiences had a much better understanding that we should be covering a wide range of issues. … we felt that our audiences expected us to be much closer to the conservation end of things, when in fact … they could see that sustainable development was a key element of that. (Niall Watson (WWF-UK), interview, July 2000)
The slogan subsequently adopted for internal purposes – ‘WWF takes action to protect the environment for people and nature’ – ‘doesn’t seem very radical, but the focus on environment and getting people in there as well is quite a significant step for us’ (Niall Watson, interview, July 2000).

Although, when interviewed in 2000, this WWF-UK spokesman described the conservation of species as ‘still the core of our business’, in 2000-1 and 2001-2 WWF-UK spent more than twice as much (about one-third of its total budget of approximately GBP 15 million for ‘grants payable in furtherance of the charity’s objectives’) on ‘levers for long-term change’ as on ‘species’ (WWF-UK Financial Report, 2001-2). ‘Levers for long-term change’ is a portfolio including education and information for schools and businesses, an International Development Policy programme in conjunction with the humanitarian NGO, CARE International, and preparations for the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. In subsequent years, expenditure on ‘levers for change’ has been disaggregated into three components – ‘capacity building’, ‘global policy’ and ‘UK social change’ – but expenditure on these items remains, in aggregate, about one-third of the grants budget (WWF-UK Annual Review 2003-4). The major growth area in WWF-UK’s grant expenditure in recent years has been in respect of ‘freshwater’, where expenditure has risen steadily from GBP 660,000 in 2000-1 to GBP 3.5 million in 2003-4. ‘Freshwater’ is a portfolio of projects, mostly in less developed countries (China, Brazil, Mexico and Tanzania), concerned with the rejuvenation of rivers, bringing benefit to people in the form of better access to clean water and improved fishing. In 2003-4, just 8% of all WWF’s charitable expenditure was on ‘species’, and it had launched major campaigns on chemicals and health and for sustainable housing in the UK.

Clearly, despite the panda logo and the invitation to ‘adopt an animal’ that heads the side-bar on its web-site, WWF-UK has moved a long way from being an organization only or primarily concerned with the preservation of iconic species. Its web-page in February and March 2005 listed its campaigns as: chemicals and health, climate chaos, sustainable homes, and a campaign to persuade the UK government to introduce a marine protection act. Its web-page in March 2005 focused on demands for tougher action on British business to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, action to preserve the British fishing industry, support for the designation of Marine Protected Areas, and protection for Britain’s forgotten dolphins, as well as a plea to ‘switch on to green electricity’. Nevertheless, approximately 70% of WWF-UK’s expenditure on conservation is on projects outside the UK; it has no reserves in the UK. Its Annual Review for 2003-4 emphasises that WWF is a global organization, observes that pollution respects no political boundaries or distinctions between rich and poor, Muslim and Christian, and draws attention to its partnerships with aid charities and the UK Department for International Development in order to tackle the ‘greatest threats to the environment: poverty and over-consumption’ (Chairman’s address, Annual Review 2003-4, p.3).

WWF sees its move toward increasing concern with sustainable development as a logical development from its initial objectives and its analysis of the promotion of those objectives, but spokesmen stress that its concern with the environment remains fundamental.
We’ll tackle poverty issues and environmental issues at the same time. … because environment is fundamental to poverty issues and aid issues, … unless the environment is at the heart of all those other organizations that are dealing with aid, and dealing with relief, and dealing with development, it’s very difficult to make it sustainable… (David Cowdry (WWF-UK), interview, July 2000).

2.1.2. FoE

FoE in 2005 reminds us that it was ‘the first environmental pressure group in the UK to start campaigns for whales, endangered species and tropical rainforests, and against acid rain, ozone depletion and climate change’ (www.foe.co.uk ‘Our campaigns’, accessed 25.3.05). Since the mid-1980s, FoE has broadened its portfolio to include deforestation and mainstream political issues such as economy and health, and has become increasingly involved in campaigns to promote human rights and economic development in the global South. To some extent, this shift reflected the views of its members and supporters who, FoE’s research suggested, were often members or supporters of groups such as Amnesty International or Oxfam, but not necessarily of other environmental groups such as Greenpeace (FoE national spokesman, interview, 2003). In its early days, FoE UK shared a mailing list with Amnesty International. More recently, personal contacts between FoE and aid and development charities have proliferated as the network of NGO employees has expanded and as movement from one to another has become increasingly common.

Since the mid 1990s, FoE has broadened its contacts with government departments from Environment to Trade and Industry, Agriculture, Health, Treasury, and the Prime Minister’s Office. According to Tony Juniper, now FoE’s Director, ‘this reflects this broadening of the agenda away from being about dicky birds and hedgerows towards about being about jobs, health and economy.’ This shift is partly a response to past success on classic environmental issues within Britain: ‘… it’s quite important to recognize when you’ve won … on a lot of issues we are in a different mode now and … talking to people in different ways’ (interview, March 2000).

FoE’s considerable interaction with other groups, mostly informal and between specialist campaigners in particular fields, increasingly extends beyond the environmental movement to include, among others, aid and development charities, organized labor, and ‘the socially progressive sector’. If its linkages help to set FoE’s international agenda, they have also encouraged its embrace of domestic social justice issues. Following the example of FoE Scotland, FoE has recently embarked upon a community development initiative in an economically deprived and heavily polluted area of Teesside, in northeast England. Here, FoE was not mobilizing its own members; it was mobilizing people in a community where there were no FoE members. After conducting a factory watch and mapping pollution against poverty, FoE went in and stated, ‘We think that this is the problem ….’:  

We wanted to make particular arguments to the governments about social exclusion and the environment and poverty and those links and joining them up. So we wanted a project that could start to make the political arguments about the links between pollution and poverty… (FoE Senior Local Campaigns Officer, interviewed by Julie Barnett, 2003). In summer 2003, FoE adopted a five-year action plan whose strategic aims are to integrate well-established work on sustainability and bio-diversity with a concern for environmental justice at home and abroad.
Not all FoE members have been easily reconciled to FoE’s increasing linkage of social justice issues with ideas of global justice. Thus, for example, the North East region report on the 2002 local groups conference expressed irritation that the conference devoted so much attention to single-issues and global issues rather than the practical issues of pollution that most concerned North East delegates (Axford 2002: 4-5). However, it should be borne in mind that the North East was the region in which FoE was most under-represented nationally. It might therefore be expected that those recruited to FoE membership in the wake of FoE’s Teesside intervention will, at least initially, put a more local and domestic construction upon the social justice agenda than longer-term members from other regions.

Indeed, for at least some of those longer-term members and local activists, the new focus upon issues of environmental justice was controversial. The ‘burning question’ at the 2003 local groups conference was whether the new focus upon environmental justice and ‘tackling the corporates’, proposed by the leadership in its five-year programme, placed at risk traditional FoE campaigns on themes like forests and biodiversity. The Director and other staff assured delegates that those issues ‘would remain key to FoE, albeit in the context of justice issues’. (YH_NE newsletter winter 2003). In the words of one elected Board member explicitly anxious to reassure traditional supporters and local campaigners:

‘As for the strategic aims, the broad thrust is that the well established work on sustainability and bio-diversity will be brought together with a concern for Environmental Justice…

We shall now be working within a broader social and economic framework, and as such can be more effective. Instead of accusations of being middle-class tree and butterfly lovers, bio-diversity issues will have a broad platform supported by the needs of Southern countries and by the rights of disadvantaged people nearer home. Detailed projects, as in Teeside [sic], where Friends of the Earth have been working with residents in low income areas affected by pollution, will strive to ensure that everyone has the right to a good environment.

We will be able to address issues such as sustainability of living conditions (and safeguarding them for future generations) and the way big corporations, the WTO et al can undermine the prospects for decent lives and long term sustainable farming and industry.

Thus the campaigns that local members have been working on for years will not have the rug taken from under them; they will be valued and supported but within a larger and even sounder intellectual and humanitarian framework.’ (Kenward 2003: 10-11)

Clearly the leadership hopes to educate local groups members to see things in terms of environmental justice, globally as well as locally. For the moment, however, the content of regional newsletters suggests that up to the end of 2004 little had changed; global / environmental justice issues account for only about one item in eight, the others being the usual mix of reports on planning and waste issues, including airports, GMOs and fundraising. Biodiversity and forests are, as before, seldom mentioned.6

The use by FoE and WWF of the concept of sustainable development to promote a comprehensive reformist agenda is clearly a more overtly political project than the simple collection of environmental issues with which they began. These developments suggest that EMOs increasingly recognize that just as the preservation of a particular species requires a more holistic ecological perspective, so the environment as an issue domain cannot be isolated from a wider range of human concerns.
2.2. Institutionalization

The increased resources that have accompanied the growth in the numbers of members and supporters during the past three decades have enabled EMOs to professionalize their organizations and their activities. Indeed, they have necessitated it. Substantial organizations with substantial budgets require accountants, office managers, membership secretaries, and lawyers. Increasingly, they have also required professional fundraisers and public relations and media experts. As these are organizations committed to basing their arguments on sound science, they have also needed scientifically educated experts and often research scientists. Few have gone as far as Greenpeace, which has even secured the services of seconded diplomats to conduct its negotiations, but the salaries indicated in EMOs’ annual reports demonstrate that these are no longer organizations of amateurs or mere enthusiasts. Professionalization has enabled EMOs to more effectively conduct their activities; it has made them more reliable interlocutors with their counterparts in other countries as well as with other organizations, governments, and corporations at home; and it has undoubtedly contributed to the disproportionate role British EMOs have played in transnational networks.

But if EMOs’ internal institutionalization has enhanced their transnational roles, the implications of their external institutionalization are more ambiguous. In response to their evident ability to command public support – and occasionally to mobilize their supporters – governments, official agencies, and sometimes corporations have sought to engage EMOs and to draw them into *domestic* policy networks.

This ‘external institutionalization’ has clearly brought opportunities for EMOs, but it has also created dilemmas about how best to deploy their energies. Even large EMOs have limited resources, and, if real power now lies beyond the nation state, such an embedding of EMOs in relationships at the national level might be considered a distraction. However, so long as national governments are receptive to the appeals and advice of EMOs, the character of international organizations means that applying pressure to national governments is an appropriate and efficacious strategy.

In any case, the official networks into which EMOs are drawn are often precisely those created to promote transnational environmental agenda, or to facilitate British participation in the formation of those agenda. To this end, successive British governments have recognized and sought to draw upon the expertise of EMOs. Thus, as early as 1990, a WWF representative was invited to join the official British delegation to UNCED. WWF-UK integrated its activities as part of a broad-based international campaign in the two years leading up to the Earth Summit in 1992, sought to coordinate the inputs of various British NGO sectors, and was involved in the IIED/UNEP coordination process. RSPB (along with FoE, CPRE and WWF) has been actively involved in the UK Government’s roundtable on sustainable development, was the lead organization in the establishment of the government’s Biodiversity Challenge Group, and has played an important role alongside government in key international environmental forums.

It is not only policy-*making* into which EMOs are drawn by increasing institutionalization. They are also increasingly involved in policy *implementation*. Most established EMOs are now focused to some degree upon ‘solutions campaigning’, and some have readily embraced opportunities to enter partnerships with government agencies and sometimes corporations.

WWF has long acted in partnership with governments and other EMOs, and makes much of its partnership with the UK Department for International Development (DFID), but in recent
years it has increasingly been drawn into partnerships with corporations. Corporate donations provided 4\% of income in 1998, but though they fell thereafter, from 2000 to 2004, the fastest rising part of WWF-UK’s (steadily increasing) income was that from corporate donations and sponsorships; a mere GBP 700,000 (0.25\% of total income) in 2000-1, these rose steadily to GBP 4.9 million (13.4\% of income) in 2003-4, exceeding even income from aid agencies and government grants (which remained broadly steady at around 9\% of total income, but down from the 16\% they comprised in 1998). A major part of the increase in corporate funding is the ‘Investing in Nature’ partnership with HSBC bank that has facilitated the spending on freshwater projects, as well as a partnership with Vodaphone to provide telecommunications in the Mafia Island Martine Park in Tanzania. WWF has been criticised for accepting commercial donations, but it insists that partnerships with companies do not inhibit it from criticising or opposing its partners where such criticism is warranted, but instead provide the ‘opportunity for dialogue and progress’ (WWF-UK Report and Financial Statements 2003-4, p.7). Thus WWF claims credit for persuading one of its partners, the building products company, Lafarge, to abandon plans to open a quarry on the Isle of Lewis, and claims that its partnership with HSBC bank enables it to influence HSBC’s lending policies, just as its partnership with DfID has not inhibited WWF from opposing policies with which it disagrees (Annual Review 2003-4).

Other EMOs, however, are more resistant to such external institutionalization. FoE is very clear about its role. Although it has sought to engage government agencies, FoE does not seek an ongoing partnership with them in implementing environmental policy. FoE ‘is a campaigning organization’ whose job ‘is to raise the standards’ that others are charged to implement (FoE Senior Local Campaigns Officer, interviewed by Julie Barnett, 2003).

Greenpeace has been even more resistant to becoming locked into time-consuming and resource-sapping consultative relationships with government. If FoE has attempted to manage its relations with government by being selective in accepting invitations to consultation, Greenpeace has been so little inclined to accept that it is not routinely invited. In part, this reflects Greenpeace’s analysis that power has shifted decisively from governments to corporations, and so it has focused its energies upon the latter. Because its agenda envisages the fundamental reinvention of business to ensure sustainability, Greenpeace has, however, increasingly been drawn beyond simple critique to the proposal of alternatives and the demonstration of their practicability. Nevertheless, despite the notable exception of its partnership with an electricity utility to establish the United Kingdom’s first major offshore wind farm, Greenpeace’s ‘constructive engagement’ with industry has rarely gone so far that it could be considered a ‘partnership’. Greenpeace, like FoE, remains primarily a campaigning organization and, even more than FoE, has aimed to deploy its limited resources where its leaders consider they might have greatest effect. Its campaigns against genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and the nuclear industry continue, and recently Greenpeace has returned to high profile campaigning against waste incineration and against the oil company Esso. Its present director, appointed in 2001, emphasizes Greenpeace’s commitment to NVDA and to ‘bearing witness’. Far from becoming a ‘domesticated’ environmental lobby group, Greenpeace has preserved its autonomy and has become a mature and impressively flexible and resourceful campaigning organization.

Larger, better-resourced organizations appear able to sustain a wider range of activities. Although WWF-UK spends 70\% of its funds on projects abroad, it also finances some projects in Britain, including, in 2003-4, education for sustainability, the PowerSwitch! Campaign, and,
as part of the freshwater portfolio, the creation of a new wetland in partnership with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (WWF-UK Report and Financial Statements 2003-4, p.11).

Institutionalization does not necessarily imply de-radicalization. WWF widened its political (rather than simply conservationist) scope, even as it became more institutionalized and professionalized, becoming a prominent critic of environmentally damaging oil pipeline projects in the Caucusus and Siberia, and playing a leading role in NGO resistance to proposed trade rules at the WTO meeting in Cancún in 2003, as well as being a vociferous lobbyist of the World Bank and other international agencies. FoE and Greenpeace have become more professionalized and enjoy more influence upon governments and corporations than they did in the 1970s. As they have acquired assets and obligations to their employees, so their increased vulnerability to litigation has compelled caution; but it is not so much that they have abandoned protest as that the range of their other activities and their opportunities for advancing their causes by other means have grown.

The novelty of the new EMOs of the 1970s was less their ecologism or their internationalism than the style of their campaigning – their populism and, especially, their exploitation of the opportunities provided by modern mass media. They – and especially Greenpeace – blazed a trail that others have increasingly followed. WWF, RSPB, and CPRE may generally confine their campaigning to conventional lobbying, but they have become increasingly adept in their use of mass media and more prepared to take public stands critical of governments and corporations.

3. EMOs and the Global Justice Movement

One striking feature of British environmentalism in the 1990s was the rise of new, more radical groups that addressed or were inspired by global issues and / or environmental defence / social justice movements in the global South. Before it became preoccupied with anti-roads protests, Earth First! began in the UK with actions to highlight the destruction of tropical rainforests, and went on, together with its offshoot, Reclaim the Streets, to become one of the focal points for the development of direct action directed against the global capitalist system that was portrayed as the source of environmental ills at home and abroad. Anti-GMO activists have made common cause with their counterparts in places such as India. The radical climate action group, Rising Tide, formed at the Hague summit on Climate Change in 1997 has had a complicated relationship with larger organizations such as Greenpeace. Such direct action groups have remained small, and their experience illustrates the dilemmas of radical activists who wish to address the big issues, including global issues, but to do so without formal organization and while prioritizing direct action that is necessarily local rather than global in its bases of mobilization.

Awareness of the Zapatista rebellion spread to Britain from 1994 onwards, and became an entrenched part of the discourse of some British radical activists. British EF! and RTS activists were amongst the tens of thousands of Zapatista supporters who attended the 16-day tour with the Zapatistas from Chiapas to Mexico City in spring 2001 (Chesters 2002). Thus the direct action strand of the environmental movement has in recent years made common cause with anti-capitalist and anti-globalization protesters. Indeed, by 2004 it appeared to have been largely assimilated to the direct action wing of the emergent global justice movement (Rootes and Saunders 2005, Saunders and Rootes 2005).

Most major British EMOs recognise that transnational capital and markets contribute significantly to environmental degradation, but of the established EMOs, it is FoE that has been
least concerned to distance itself from the anarchistic direct activists. Whereas some aid and development charities such as Oxfam, Jubilee and the World Development Movement have been critical of the policies and/or the tactics of anti-globalization protesters which they see as counter-productive, FoE welcomed the protests on the grounds that they helped to open a debate in which others could participate. Indeed, FoE ‘sees a symbiosis between protesters set on confrontation and those striking deals with business. FoE benefits from the elevation of issues on the public agenda, while the protesters draw credibility from FoE’s serious research and policy analysis.’ (Clark and Themudo 2003: 125).

Though FoE’s Director, Tony Juniper, was reputedly impressed by the scale of the demonstration in Seattle against the WTO and the broad range of interests it mobilized, FoE has, like Jubilee, been careful to avoid involvement in the disorder that has often accompanied such large-scale international demonstrations. According to Sheila Freeman (post and volunteers coordinator at FoE ENWI), FoE has become very interested in the anti-capitalist/globalisation … issue. In fact that has been the basis of some of our big campaigns … [But] Friends of the Earth are of course very wary of throwing rocks at windows and getting lots of police out and any of that sort of thing, and as a big organisation, I think they have to be. (Freeman, interviewed by Clare Saunders, February 2004) (Saunders 2005).

FoE has, however, been more unreservedly involved in joint action with the less confrontational actors in the GJM. FoE has, since 1997, been involved, alongside aid and development charities, in the campaigns against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), campaigns that prefigured what has become the major British strand of the GJM. Concerned that GATS would override nation states’ abilities to enforce their own environmental legislation, FoE urged members to write to their MPs to complain about the lack of democracy in the GATS negotiations, and petitioned Members of the European Parliament (FoE 2002b). In September 2003, FoE campaigners visited Prime Minister Blair, asking him to restrict the agenda of the WTO meeting in Cancún, and accusing him of being ‘in the pocket’ of big businesses (FoE 2003). FoE was also centrally involved in the coordination of a ‘trade justice march’ timed to coincide with the Geneva WTO meeting in June 2002 that attracted 5,000 participants. FoE was also for some time locked in battle with the WTO over its claim that the EU’s restrictions on the import of genetically modified food were an illegal constraint on trade.

Representatives of FoE and Greenpeace have for some time participated in international environmental and economic conferences, and have joined in the ‘summit hopping’ of the direct action global justice movement. Both were active at the Climate Change conference at the Hague in 1997, FoE campaigners helping to build a sand bag dyke to raise awareness of the effects of climate change. Whilst reformist EMOs such as FoE and Greenpeace can be seen as part of the same broad movement as radical groupings such as Rising Tide, there is more than a little ambivalence in relations between them. Greenpeace campaigners allegedly branded the eco-activist networks campaigning against the Kyoto Treaty as ‘anarchists who should not be listened to’ (Saunders 2005). In general, however, the established EMOs have often offered practical aid to direct activists in recognition of the value of the ‘radical flank effect’ they provide.

FoE’s five-year programme for 2003-2008 has four campaign themes: environmental justice; sustainable economies; environmental limits; and accountability/participation. The environmental justice theme aims to make considerations of social equity central to the way the
public and decision-makers view environmental issues. It incorporates a campaign for ‘climate justice’, seeking an equitable climate change treaty, and ‘action for justice’, working with community groups suffering from injustices. The aim of the sustainable economies theme is to develop a sustainable economic agenda. This incorporates an attempt to ‘curb the power of the supermarkets’, by ensuring they are made accountable for their social and environmental impacts, and by promoting local alternatives, and, most significantly in the present context, to ‘derail the WTO’ by challenging its legitimacy, preventing its expansion, and halting the liberalisation of its services. Other aspects of new economics include ‘corporate accountability’, which involves highlighting socially and environmentally damaging corporate practices and seeking to introduce a new regulatory framework, and ‘reducing resource use’, to expose the impacts of UK resource consumption on the environment, oppose unsustainable waste disposal, and promote zero waste policies. Accountability/participation seeks to improve the quality and quantity of grassroots campaigning in and outside FoE (FoE 2002a). FoE claims to be concerned about global trade because of its abuse of democracy, threats to human rights, disregard for the environment, and encouragement of a growing gap between the rich and the poor.10 (Saunders 2005)

In keeping with this agenda, FoE was, alone among the major EMOs, well-represented at the October 2004 European Social Forum (ESF) in London, with a trailer outside the entrance offering a taste of life in an oil economy, and a well-stocked desk inside the main hall. If its presence was intended to influence the agenda of others at the Forum rather than as an act of solidarity, it must have been disappointed by the apparent marginality of environmental concerns to the others there assembled. The influence of the GJM upon EMOs has been limited, chiefly because most of the actors within the ESF process do not appear to take the environment terribly seriously. At the London ESF, despite ‘Environmental crisis, against neoliberalism and for sustainable societies’ being the sixth of the six ‘axes’ of the Forum, references to environmental issues were notably sparse, the partial exception being climate change. But climate change was mostly used as a stick with which to beat the traditional enemies of the left. Its inclusion in the declaration of the ‘Assembly of the Social Movements’ that concluded the ESF appeared to be principally as a sop to younger activists who complained that they had been marginalized in the process. The declaration was otherwise dominated by the traditional concerns of the left. A further indication of the marginality of environmental issues to the direct action wing of the GJM is the fact that of the trains hired to take activists from London to Scotland for the protests at the G8 meeting in July 2005 one is scheduled to depart before and the other on the International Day of Action on Climate Change which is part of that week of protest. If the advent of the GJM has influenced the agenda of EMOs, there is little evidence that the efforts of EMOs have had any corresponding influence on many of the activists in the GJM.11

4. The global and the constraints of the local

The involvement of EMOs in national and international policy networks and transnational campaigns has implications for the relationships between them and their local constituencies. If their paths to transnational or international centres of power often pass through national governments, national EMOs must be careful to maintain their legitimacy in the eyes of those national governments, and their ability to demonstrate wide public support is an important contributor to that legitimacy. But just as their embeddedness in national policy networks makes
it more important for EMOs to maintain healthy relationships with their local supporters, it also makes it more difficult to do so.

The need to maintain the loyalty and commitment of their members and supporters is a universal constraint upon EMOs. FoE was sharply alerted to this early in its history. Local groups demanded greater say in management and campaign strategy, and in 1981 an alliance between national office staff and local groups challenged the strategy of the leadership and dominance of the Board of Directors (Lamb 1996: 97-99). The resolution of this dispute had an enduring impact upon FoE’s constitutional structure and identity. Although FoE national officers attempt to set campaign priorities based upon expert, science-based advice, they are acutely aware of the need to be responsive to members’ local and often scientifically questionable concerns. FoE’s campaign agenda are, consequently, products of compromise. The staff and experts

… carry out an environmental and political analysis and then see … where [are] the big problems, where can we make a difference …. but we do consult our volunteer local groups … as well. So the mixture of campaigns … some are there because our local groups are passionate about them … even if we don’t necessarily perceive that it is the most important issue for us to campaign on…

Is it right just to have a scientifically set agenda? Now from our perspective as a pressure group, we need public support, we need local activists, we need people to join in with us. … We could set a purely scientific agenda but if that didn’t turn people on, then we wouldn’t have money to operate and we wouldn’t have the people to do their own lobbying and campaigning at a local or regional or national level. So we can’t make that choice [to have] a purely scientific agenda. (FoE national spokesman interviewed by Julie Barnett, 2003).

WWF too is formally a membership organization, as is RSPB, and although in practice their national leaderships are able to set campaign priorities according to their own assessment of scientific advice, they too have been cautious not to lose touch with members.

Greenpeace, by contrast, is not a mass-membership organization and its structure is designed to ensure the autonomy of its governing elite, making no concessions to any desire of supporters to influence policy. But if this gives Greenpeace an unusual degree of flexibility and autonomy, it is nevertheless not completely immune from the constraints of the local. Greenpeace is limited by the need to maintain income and supporters’ commitment. During the 1990s, the numbers of supporting donors fluctuated according to the proportion of resources devoted to donor recruitment, and its local support groups, limited to fund-raising, suffered high rates of attrition. In 1995, in response to criticism from without and growing feeling within, Greenpeace permitted its local groups to participate in centrally directed campaigns, and in 1999 Greenpeace established an ‘active supporters’ network to harness the energies of the many supporters who its own research showed wanted to be more involved in campaigns but had no wish to attend monthly meetings. ‘Active supporters’ receive news by email or newsletter, as well as suggestions about how they might assist in Greenpeace campaigns, and they are offered training in NVDA, political and corporate lobbying, and communication, legal and media skills. Nevertheless, although ‘active supporters’ are seen as a locally based campaigning arm of Greenpeace UK rather than as fundraisers or distributors of information, and are actively consulted about tactics for local actions (Saunders 2005: 40)12, there is no mechanism by which they might influence policy.
Both FoE and Greenpeace now make conscious efforts to involve grassroots supporters. One of FoE’s objectives is to encourage ‘people participating actively as citizens and organising, mobilizing and inspiring people to become active citizens’ (FoE 2003). Accordingly, FoE Regional Campaigns Co-ordinators work to involve local FoE groups and other local community campaigning groups and offer them support and advice. Greenpeace, on the other hand, is more concerned with providing people with the know-how, experience and confidence to take what they learn from Greenpeace and to apply it to other campaigns independent of Greenpeace. Thus in the Basingstoke incinerator action in 2002, the Greenpeace actions team worked with locals from other, non-Greenpeace groups, but Greenpeace only supports local campaigns like this when there is a very tight link with its national priority themes, in this case Greenpeace’s Incinerator Busters campaign (2001-2) (see Saunders 2005:39-40 and chapter 12).

According to Torrance (Greenpeace Networker), his job is all about:

coordinating and managing a network of volunteers who want to, or at least say to us that they want to, actively participate in Greenpeace campaigns. Perhaps we train them up in NVDA, we involve them in our direct actions … There are a whole range of activities out there … from people receiving a newsletter we produce each month called Network, to getting people letter writing, to people participating in Greenpeace campaigns, and ultimately to feel that they themselves could set up a local opposition group to any incinerator plan or whatever. And I think that Greenpeace is one of those organisations out there which is just a real conduit for people … a kind of wake up call (interviewed by Clare Saunders, July 2003).

Certainly, there are many campaigners who began their activist careers as Greenpeace local supporters and went on to become increasingly involved in local campaigns as well as Greenpeace direct actions. FoE has played a similar role. (Saunders 2005: 39-40).

For local group campaigns, both FoE and Greenpeace produce ‘action packs’. Although FoE groups may also campaign on their own initiative, choosing their own issues and methods (so long as they do not bring the name FoE into disrepute), most FoE local groups are involved in rolling out national campaigns at local level and, like Greenpeace local groups, receive posters, briefings and instructions from the national office (Saunders 2005: 40). However, unlike Greenpeace, local FoE groups now contribute substantially not only to FoE’s actions but also to its planning and policies through advisory groups which support FoE’s campaign teams.13

As part of its strategic commitment to the empowerment of communities, FoE is generally supportive of other community groups, and in 2003 launched a Community Website to encourage networking among local groups and stimulate them to campaign. Moreover, ‘because local FoE groups campaign on a range of issues, local ad hoc environmental campaigns often latch on to FoE, sometimes without … seeking help from Greenpeace. FoE was very active nationally, locally and regionally in the campaigns against airport expansion, but Greenpeace was notably absent.’ (Saunders 2005:40),

Greenpeace remains very much an elite-directed campaign organization, and its willingness to be involved in local campaigns is limited and conditional. One local activist who sought Greenpeace’s support for a community campaign received an email informing him that:

“Greenpeace as an organisation doesn’t get involved in local issues” … Greenpeace … wrote back … and said “don’t worry, we will pass it on to some local groups, maybe FoE” … (Coleman, interviewed by Clare Saunders, November 2003 [Saunders 2005:41]).

As Saunders (2005: 40) puts it, ‘although Greenpeace and FoE both use local support to bolster their organisations, FoE clearly has a much larger presence at the community level and to
a greater extent regards the contribution of grassroots campaigners as crucial for achieving the kind of sustainable society it envisages.’

The experiences of the leading British EMOs in attempting to respond to the desires of their supporters to be more involved reveal some of the tensions and strategic dilemmas involved in EMOs’ seeking to be effective players on the national and international stages, while harnessing the commitment of their most energetic supporters. Attending to the interests of local supporters does not, however, necessarily mean that EMOs are thereby drawn away from the transnational. As both WWF and FoE found from their membership surveys, transnational issues were more important to their supporters than the EMOs’ national officers had supposed.

Whatever opportunities external circumstances present, an EMO’s identity is a factor in the strategic choices that must be made. WWF escapes the local / global dilemma to the extent that it has always had an unambiguously transnational identity and remit, with a primary commitment to practical conservation work abroad. For broad spectrum EMOs such as FoE and Greenpeace, the dilemmas are more complex. On the one hand, they need to pay sufficient attention to domestic issues to persuade local supporters and potential supporters of their practical relevance; on the other hand, they must satisfy other supporters’ concerns with global issues. FoE’s decentralized organizational structure is more suited than is Greenpeace’s centralized structure to enabling it to satisfy both constituencies, albeit at the price of continuing compromises over campaign priorities.

During the 1990s, the numbers of members and supporters of WWF, FoE and Greenpeace leveled off while older, less activist and / or less transnationalist EMOs (such as the National Trust, the Wildlife Trusts, and RSPB) and some newer, uncomplicatedly national organizations (such as the Woodland Trust) continued to grow.14 Since 1998, the numbers of supporters of most national EMOs have risen significantly. WWF supporters increased by over a third to 330,000 in 2005 and Greenpeace has seen its supporter base increase by more than 10% to 221,00015. FoE appears to have been the exception; its 2003-4 annual review rather coyly refers to ‘over 100,000’ supporters and to over 90,000 readers of its review, Earthmatters, both figures well below the membership of 119,000 reported for 2002. Clearly, not all public concern with the environment is readily assimilated to transnational agenda.

If it was always a parody of older environmental organizations to suggest that their conservationism was some kind of blinkered failure to recognize the superior claims of political ecologism, it is nevertheless clear that some things have changed.

British EMOs have in recent years become more effectively transnational, both in the conception of their agenda and their alliances. The main stimuli to this have not, however, been the changed patterns of opportunities represented by the development of international institutions or the EU, so much as the inherent implications of their commitment to environmental protection. The symbolic marker for British EMOs was the Rio Earth Summit of 1992. The preparations for that conference entailed an unprecedented degree of inter-organizational cooperation and the processes initiated or consolidated there appear to have had profound effects upon those most involved. At Rio, the vociferous protests of activists from the global South obliged Northern EMOs and NGOs to take stock, and to take more seriously the perspectives and sensitivities of the peoples of the less industrialized world.

If the British environmental movement today is a more convincingly transnational movement than it was thirty years ago, this is not, for EMO elites themselves, a radical departure so much as an incremental development of already existing perspectives and aspirations. The
more dramatic change is the development of a substantial non-elitist audience/constituency for such views. Of this, mass media has been both progenitor and reflector, but it is perhaps especially the expansion of higher education that has created a more confident, more knowledgeable, and more critical audience and constituency for EMOs.

Nevertheless, it is striking that so many of the efforts and resources of even the most internationalist of British EMOs are devoted to particular campaigns within Britain, targeted at British governments and corporations about essentially domestic issues. Even WWF, among many campaigns that are clearly international, included in 2003 a campaign to encouraging the UK government to focus on the future of sustainable energy resources and adopt a Sustainable Energy Bill, setting binding targets for renewable energy and energy efficiency; its campaign for higher design standards for new housing developments on the Thames Gateway has by 2005 resolved into a campaign for 1 million sustainable houses.

There are several reasons for this effort to highlight concern with the local even to the extent of occluding the financially more significant work at the transnational level. Even internationalist EMOs need to make connections between their global programmatic concerns and practical actions potentially affecting their domestic constituencies. In part, this is simply good environmental education. But there are more pragmatic reasons as well. The resources of EMOs are limited, and limited resources dictate selectivity in campaigning. Inevitably, there will be a tendency to select those campaign issues that have greatest visibility among those who might be expected to join or support the EMO in question, and so a bias toward responsiveness to domestic concerns is built in.

However, it is not only the resources of EMOs that are disproportionately distributed domestically. So, too, are their opportunities for effective action. It is national and local arenas that are most easily understood, where action is most likely to be effective, and where the dividends on investment are most likely to be apparent to the constituencies upon which EMOs depend. Greenpeace has since the early 1990s declined, even disappeared, in a number of countries. The reasons vary, but the common thread is the perception that, in its insistence on being a transnational elite-directed EMO, it was insensitive to the local and domestic concerns and perspectives of many who had previously supported it.

5. Explaining variation in EMOs’ responses to the challenges of globalization

WWF, FoE and Greenpeace were always transnational in inspiration and aspiration. Yet in the ways they have responded to the challenges of globalization, they have differed.

WWF has, essentially, changed from within. The broadening of its agenda to embrace sustainable development and the alleviation of poverty in the developing world is a direct product of its increasing awareness of the social changes necessary if its original objectives of halting the loss of species and environmental degradation were to be realized. Doubtless criticism of its earlier neglect of the human implications of some of its projects has helped the learning process along, but the process of change has been essentially endogenous. As the British branch of a centrally organized international NGO enjoying unparalleled access to political elites, with much of its activity taking the form of large-budget projects in less developed countries, often in partnership with government departments and agencies such as DfID and latterly with large corporations, WWF has been relatively insulated from grassroots pressure. This is especially true because WWF has been able to bask in the image of its past self as a large-animal conservation society still employing the panda logo and inviting supporters to
'adopt an animal'. Because of its education work, it has a younger membership than other EMOs (Lamb 1996:187-8) and appeals to an audience many of whom probably have little understanding of its more extensive activities. At least, that is what WWF appears to have thought of its supporters as it trod a conservative path for fear of alienating them. Yet the surveys it commissioned showed that many supporters were actually ahead of WWF in wishing it to commit more resources to a broader agenda. WWF’s nervousness about getting ahead of its supporters revealed the poverty of the communication channels from grassroots to elite in a very traditionally structured organization. It is not difficult, given its elite connections and partnerships, to understand why WWF has kept its distance from the more vociferous elements of the GJM; its strategy of working with the powerful in order to enlighten them and improve their practice is the antithesis of the strategy of confrontation and ridicule that is characteristic of the direct action wing of the GJM.

FoE, by contrast, appears to have changed as a consequence of its external associations as much as because of the imperatives of its programmatic concerns. Greenpeace appears to have changed relatively little. But why, given that FoE and Greenpeace started, in Britain at least, in much the same space, has Greenpeace resisted the broadening of agenda that FoE has now so thoroughly embraced? Three broad lines of difference emerge that both describe and do much to explain the differences that have emerged between them: strategy and tactics; organizational structures and relationships with supporters, and; relationships with other actors in the environmental movement network.

• Difference in strategy and tactics. Greenpeace has, from the very beginning, maintained an a priori commitment to ‘bearing witness’, to direct action designed to draw media attention to its campaign issues in order to embarrass governments and corporations into mending their ways. FoE was always more cerebral, more committed to ‘getting the science right’, and more pragmatic, more willing to be drawn into long term relationships with its interlocutors, especially in government.

• Organizational structures and relationships with supporters. Greenpeace’s organizational structure preserves elite autonomy and insulates the governing elite from pressure from the grassroots. FoE must attend to the concerns of local groups and so mounts campaigns that are a compromise between elite and grassroots preferences.

• Relationships with other actors in the environmental movement network. FoE is, despite its modest size and budget, at the centre of the network, and many of its campaigns are taken in partnership with other EMOs and, indeed, increasingly with other actors beyond the environmental movement. Greenpeace, by contrast, has shown a marked preference for acting alone, and although it has joined in joint campaigns, notably with FoE and WWF, it does not, even now, accord the same priority to networking and joint action as does FoE.

Greenpeace has for two decades been distinguished by hard-headed calculation in its campaign strategies. It started with opposition to nuclear weapons testing and quickly expanded to embrace a range of marine issues – the preservation of seals and cetaceans, and opposition of pollution of the seas – and the protection of ancient forests, and opposition to other toxic chemicals. The only significant innovations in its policy portfolio have been opposition to GMOs and relatively brief involvement in the protests against the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The latter, which might be seen as an extension of its original campaign to bear witness against nuclear weapons, clearly did not fit comfortably with its otherwise conservation-focused agenda, and Greenpeace’s effective withdrawal from the campaign once the invasion had taken place appears to have been the product of the kind of strategic decision that has seen Greenpeace drop...
campaigns such as incineration in the past. What distinguishes Greenpeace is that it is a tightly run organization the decisions of whose directors are made in relative isolation from the supporters and which has maintained its original commitments to direct action to attract attention to a few core campaigns. At the risk of parody, it might be said that Greenpeace is principally committed to the maintenance of its media profile as the direct action environmental organization. As such, it has chosen to stay focused and to avoid long-term commitments to campaigns that stray from its core issues and in which it cannot play a leading role. Thus Greenpeace, unlike FoE and WWF, has remained relatively aloof from the development and social justice agenda, even during the Rio Earth Summit. As Greenpeace UK spokesman, Chris Rose, put it

We’ve largely tried to avoid it, we don’t want to get trapped inside that. The last thing we want to do is get drawn into a position where there’s great rafts of agendas all smothered by huge amounts of discussion. (quoted in Lamb 1996: 187)

Greenpeace appears more committed to the propaganda of the deed than to the intellectual development of systematic alternative models of global development (cf. Lamb 1996:186). Overwhelmingly financed by its individual supporters’ donations, it is strongest in western Europe, and its structure of governance does not encourage the autonomous development of grassroots groups. Because it is a campaigning organization that has not sought long-term partnerships, it has been relatively immune from pressures to change its agenda in response to the emergence of new issues marginal to its environmental focus. It is not that Greenpeace is uninterested in issues of global justice and sustainable development so much as that its focusing of its limited resources upon its core issues precludes its being active on issues that might complicate its message.

It is precisely because FoE is a more ideas-driven organization that it has been willing to broaden its agenda in a way that Greenpeace has not. According to its former director, Charles Secrett,

We work with the widest possible range of issues. We don’t see how you can deal with any single issue in isolation from the others. Time and again we led the way in shaping and developing the agenda of the green movement as a whole, in terms of introducing new issues to campaign on that others then see the relevance of and follow suit. (quoted by Lamb 1996:186)

FoE’s remit was always relatively anthropocentric, and today it is unabashedly and uncompromisingly anthropocentric. Its web-page (www.foe.co.uk, accessed 25.3.05), under a graphic entitled “Press for change. Simple steps to … a greener lifestyle – corporates, climate, other campaigns”, proclaims: ‘Friends of the Earth inspires solutions to environmental problems which make life better for people.’ Because its issue range is so broad and its reach more nearly global, the impact of corporate-dominated globalization is most apparent to FoE.

FoE considers its international network to be a key strength that distinguishes it from other EMOs:

when we are … talking about global issues… we can fairly say that we know what people in the South think about this, because they are part of our network and they are working on it as well … I think [that] is a clear difference between us and say Greenpeace or … WWF. Both do the work, but to be a member of the FoE International, groups apply to join … we don’t go into countries and set up an office and start up a group. It is still very much grassroots power … (FoE national spokesman, interviewed by Julie Barnett, 2003)16
The character of FoE International as a federation of national organizations which do not even have to employ the FoE name is in stark contrast with Greenpeace in which the Board of Greenpeace International licenses national or regional branches to use the Greenpeace name only so long as they pursue a centrally determined agenda. The latter may make for more coherent campaigning and minimize inter-national wrangling, but it does not encourage the expression of a diversity of national and regional views from which other partners might learn. Thus FoE UK has been notably open to influence by the concerns and perspectives of its partners in the global South. For example, FoE was persuaded by its partners in oil-producing countries that because oil production was devastating the lives of their people, FoE should avoid any dealings with oil companies that might imply its endorsement of them (Clark 2003:21), and it has recently campaigned, with partners, against the further development of the oil economy (‘No New Oil’).

Local and regional groups within the UK do have the same degree of autonomy from the national organization as the members of FoEI do from FoEI, but they are not, as the local groups of Greenpeace are / were, tightly controlled by the national office, and FoE’s decision not to expand the size of the national office means that future development is expected to be in the regions and locally. Not only does this encourage pluralism and provide conduits for the input of new perspectives and concerns, making FoE a peculiarly responsive EMO to grassroots concerns, but it also makes FoE more receptive to the views and concerns of grassroots activists outside FoE and even outside the environmental movement. Outside London, in smaller cities and even in some quite large cities such as Glasgow and Manchester, local activist milieux are often multi-issue, with quite close ties between activists interested in and campaigning on a variety of humanitarian, development, social justice and environmental issues (Doherty 2004, Diani and Bison 2004). The result is often a multi-stranded activist community whose common commitment is to activism or to a meta-critique of capitalism rather than to a single issue domain (Rootes and Saunders 2005). FoE is often, but not invariably, involved in such local networks, and the perspectives and knowledge acquired by activists there may, by comparison with Greenpeace or WWF, relatively easily percolate upward to the national organization.

Its openness as an organization, nationally and internationally, means that FoE more readily makes common cause with other groups campaigning against inequalities and injustices globally – WDM, People and Planet, Oxfam – and helps to explain its involvement in the WSF / ESF process.

Conclusion

The fact that WWF, FoE and Greenpeace have taken different paths is essentially a matter of strategic choice. But strategic choices are not made in a vacuum. They are influenced and constrained by the configuration of institutions and cultures over which actors have no control, as well as by the institutions and cultures of organizations themselves, which may to any single generation of activists appear almost equally obdurate.

I have attempted in this paper to illuminate the extent to which environmental movements have remained nationally distinct even as the challenges and opportunities to think and act globally have increased, and I have attempted to show how, in one national context, three leading trans-/inter-national EMOs have responded differently to the challenges of globalization and the rise of the global justice movement.

There is no neat end to this story. A genuinely global environmental movement remains an aspiration rather than an accomplished fact. Viewed in the aggregate, there is evidence of
increased transnationalization in the coordination of EMOs in transnational networks of various kinds. *Ad hoc* campaigns are made easier and more effective by electronic communication and by more or less regular, if not necessarily frequent, contact through rather skeletal networks. Nevertheless, it is sobering to consider that in Britain as elsewhere, the transnational EMOs that grew so dramatically in the 1970s and 1980s remain small by comparison with established national nature and wildlife protection organizations. Although the latter may be linked by international umbrella organizations to other, similar organizations in other countries, the largest remain primarily national as well as specialized in their scope and orientation. The broadening of their agenda to embrace biodiversity and even sustainable development may be small compensation for the relative stagnation in the numbers of supporters of more committedly transnational EMOs. This alone should be enough to quieten the voices of complaint that the transnational EMOs are not transnational enough and not enough concerned with the global justice agenda.
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Table 1. Leading British National Environmental Organizations (c. 2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Year founded in UK</th>
<th>Members/ donor supporters (thousands)</th>
<th>Income/ donor supporters (million GBP)</th>
<th>Staff employed</th>
<th>Local groups</th>
<th>Manage property / reserves</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RSPB</td>
<td>1889</td>
<td>1,020</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>160†</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Trust</td>
<td>1895</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>4,000 +</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife Trusts *</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1517</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPRE</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Trust *</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>900</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWF</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>c. 200</td>
<td>not in UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends of the Earth</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>5†</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>c. 220</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodland Trust</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenpeace UK</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100²</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife &amp; Countryside Link **</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>35 organizations (including all of above except the Civic Trust)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* umbrella groups representing autonomous local / regional groups
** umbrella organization linking autonomous member organizations
† excludes income of FoE Trust (c. GBP 3 million p.a.)

Notes
1. plus 130 youth groups
2. estimated in 2000, probably fewer in 2002 as a result of policy of merging existing groups

Sources: Social Trends 33 (2003); annual reports and websites of EMOs themselves.
Notes

I am indebted to Debbie Adams, Sandy Miller, Clare Saunders, and Ben Seel for their assistance with the collection and/or analysis of much of the data on which this discussion draws. The paper draws on research funded by the EC Directorate General for Research and undertaken as part of the TEA (Transformation of Environmental Activism) project (contract no.: ENV4-CT97-0514), a description of which may be found at: www.ukc.ac.uk/sspsrr/TEA.html. I am also grateful to Julie Barnett for permission to use material from interviews she conducted in 2003 as part of the project ‘Working with Special Interest Groups’ contracted by the Environment Agency. More recent data has been collected as part of the EC-funded DEMOS project (contract no.: CIT2-CT2004-506026), a description of which may be found at http://demos.iue.it/. I am especially grateful to Clare Saunders for her invaluable work on the DEMOS project, her helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper, and her willingness to share material from her PhD thesis.

1. In 2003, EEB described itself as “a federation of 141 environmental citizens organizations” ranging “from local and national to European and international,” and listed 134 members in 26 countries, including all the EU member states, Turkey, Algeria, and most of the “accession” states accepted for early entry to the EU (www.eeb.org).

2. As the UK is a multi-national state, but one in which a single nation – England – is overwhelmingly dominant, it is often difficult to distinguish the strictly English from the British/UK I have therefore adopted an inclusive definition, treating as “national” all organizations that operate in one or more of the nations that comprise the UK Of the 117 EMOs surveyed, 97 were British/English, and 20 operated only in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

3. The discussion that follows draws in part upon research and interviews undertaken by Ben Seel (on FoE and Greenpeace) and by Debbie Adams (on WWF, RSPB and CPRE) in 2000, as well as on interviews conducted in 2003 by Julie Barnett. The most accessible history of FoE is Lamb (1996). On CPRE, see Lowe et al. (2001).

4 Greenpeace has, until very recently, been quite disciplined in its maintenance of a focus upon a few core environmental issues, but its increasing commitment to ‘solutions campaigning’ has brought it into closer contact with corporations and toward a more comprehensively critical understanding of the structures of power in modern societies. Its public face in 2005 and for the past several years, is however, that of an active campaigning organization employing actions calculated to attract media attention to a broad portfolio of ten campaign issues: Ancient Forests; Oceans; Toxics; Nuclear; Stop the War; Global Warming; Renewable Energy; GM; Star Wars; Incineration (www.greenpeace.org.uk ‘Campaigns’, accessed 31.3.2005). Its mission statement (accessed January 2005) states that ‘Greenpeace is an independent non-profit global campaigning organization that uses non-violent, creative confrontation to expose global environmental problems and their causes. We research the solutions and alternatives to help provide a path for a green and peaceful future.’

5 It is claimed that WWF was described by Michael Meacher, UK Environment Minister from 1997-2003, as “his alternative civil service” (Stuart White, interview, July 2000).

6 Thus, for example, the Yorkshire & Humberside newsletter for Spring 2004 included only one ‘global’ item – a report of a ‘pull the plug on GATS’ action to publicise the campaign against water privatization – but the action reported was mounted by the World Development Movement (WDM) and not by FoE, the link being the author, an elderly member of both and the editor of that issue of the newsletter!

7 For two favourable, but different, estimations of WWF by former FoE Directors Secrett and Porritt, see Lamb 1996: 187. Porritt, who went on to become a WWF trustee, suggests that much of the criticism of WWF by other conservation and animal welfare organizations stems from their
opposition to WWF's 'brave' insistence on 'seeking to put across conservation themes in a humanitarian light'.

8 This section draws liberally on parts of Saunders and Rootes (2005) of which Clare Saunders was the principal author.

9 Nevertheless, some Rising Tide (RT) activists have been directly involved in Greenpeace local groups, one RT activist works for FoE, and there has been fairly extensive cooperation between FoE and RT in their establishment of the No New Oil coalition.

10 If FoE’s current highlighting of its critique of ‘corporates’ makes it sound like an outlandish bastion of the radical European left, it is instructive to compare the rhetoric of recent statements by directors of the Sierra Club in the US. See, e.g., ‘Democracy Under Fire’, speech delivered to the Sierra Club's National Advisory Committee in Washington, D.C., by Bruce Hamilton, Sierra Club Conservation Director, in March 2005. http://www.sierraclub.org/planet/200503/democracy.asp (accessed 30.3.2005)

11 One of the few shreds of evidence of movement in the latter direction is provided by the student group, People and Planet, which used to be known as Third World First, which has in recent years picked up the climate change issue amongst other environmental concerns.

12 'Greenpeace does however consider the views of its local group members when planning actions (Dorey interview, January 2004):

… every action we do on the street they ask us to send back a feedback form … [there is] constant feedback with the Supporters Unit and they … meet with the campaigners to listen to the ideas they have got and then they say “I don’t think it’s going to work, or we need to do this” …

Many local activists form a pool of labour for high profile Greenpeace actions and play a more integral role than often assumed.' (Saunders 2005:40)

13 Thus, the waste team is supported by a Waste Advisory Group drawn from local campaigners with expertise in waste matters (Saunders 2005: 41).

14 van der Heijden (2002) observes a similar phenomenon in the Netherlands.

15 Figures from WWF and Greenpeace websites accessed on 4.4.2005.

16 FoE UK plays a prominent role in FoE Europe, where the focus is more upon building up the European FoE network than lobbying European policymakers. Latterly, it has been particularly active in supporting local EMOs in the countries of the former Soviet bloc (see, e.g., Fagan and Jehlicka 2003, Fagan 2004 on the Czech Republic).

17 FoE may be part of the most convincingly global transnational network, but FoE International in 2003 had a Secretariat of just fifteen professionals and five volunteers that is little more than a node for the network of its sixty-six autonomous national member organizations (Stokke and Thomassen 2003: 296-8).