Agents of Ecological Transformation: Environmental Organizations in Sweden

by Andrew Jamison and Magnus Ring

Introduction

The politics of the environment are not what they used to be. In the Scandinavian countries of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, which were among the first in Europe to respond to the coming of the environmental crisis in the 1960s, both the talk and the action have changed in fundamental ways over the past 15 years (Christiansen et al 1996). Among policy-makers as well as activists, the emphasis has shifted from an earlier focus on preserving non-human nature - *environmental protection* - to a new, and much less sharply delineated, focus on changing societies and social behavior into more "sustainable" directions. Since 1987, when a commission headed by former Norwegian prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland articulated the policy doctrine of sustainable development in its report, *Our Common Future*, the Scandinavian countries have entered, slowly but surely, into a strange new world of *ecological transformation*, which has strongly affected the organization of environmental activism.

Signs of this transformation are everywhere. In Sweden, which will be the subject of this paper, former activists of the environmental movement organizations of the 1970s have, in recent years, become leaders of established political parties,

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1 This paper has been written within the project, The Transformation of Environmental Activism, supported by the European Union. It also draws on research that was conducted in the EU-supported project, Public Engagement and Science and Technology Policy Options (PESTO), in which Kees Dekker interviewed a number of Swedish environmental activists (Dekker et al 1998).
European Union civil servants, board members of corporations and expert consultants on infrastructural construction projects and, most recently, director of the state environmental protection agency. Göran Persson, the social democratic prime minister, declared in 1996 when he took office that he wanted to make Sweden a world leader (föregångsland) in the ecological adaptation of society. "Ecological demands can lead to a new leap forward in economic growth," he said (quoted in Hermele 2000, p 32).

On a discursive level, the negative, oppositional tones that characterized so much of the environmental debate in the 1960s and 1970s have tended to give way in the 1990s to the encouraging, good news rhetoric of sustainable development. At the same time, an environmental consciousness has ceased to serve in Sweden as a living source of identity for a relatively small number of activists and has become instead a much broader, but also more variegated, source of inspiration for society as a whole. What had previously been a social movement, protesting against industrial society and its waste and artificiality, has come to be supplanted over the past decade by a much more differentiated and contested set of practices, ideas, projects and symbols.

The emblematic, exclamatory "no-saying" that was so characteristic of the nuclear debate of the 1970s, when books had titles, such as "Stop nuclear energy!" "Don't Let Yourself Be Calmed!" and "Vote no!", has tended to be replaced by more positive and conciliatory messages: "ecological adaptation", "environmental management", "environmental-friendly consumption". Meanwhile, instead of being viewed by those in powerful positions primarily as a threat to the further expansion of industrial society, environmental concern has come to be seen, by many influential actors in both business and government, as an important contributor to economic recovery and rejuvenation, and, for some, even as an interesting source of profit (cf Gillberg 1999).

The environmental movement, which emerged in Sweden in the 1960s as a mixture of local, grass-roots activism and modernized popular conservationism has

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2 Lennart Daleus, the new chairman of the Center Party, was one of the founders in the 1970s of Swedish Friends of the Earth and chairman of the popular campaign against nuclear energy. Per Kågeson, a leading anti-nuclear activist in the 1970s, works for the European Commission; Björn Gillberg is responsible for the environmental assessment of the new city tunnel project through Malmö and in January 2000 was named to the board of Klippan AB; Lars-Erik Liljelund, a leading "field biologist" in the 1970s (see below), was named director of the Environmental Protection Agency (Statens Naturvårdsverk) in 1999.
come to be decomposed and reinvented in recent years as elements in constructive programs of scientific, technological, and socio-economic development. There has also been a reorientation in much environmentally-related knowledge production toward approaches that are based on so-called preventive principles, and which seek to integrate environmental concern into ever more areas of social and economic life. Rather than delimiting environmental protection to a separate policy sector or a specialized area of scientific-technical competence, there is a growing awareness that changes need to take place throughout the entire society if there is to be an adequate alleviation of environmental problems (Jamison and Baark 1999).

We have come to characterize these various processes of societal readjustment as ecological transformation, in order to emphasize the all-encompassing, yet highly differentiated nature of the changes taking place (Jamison and Ring 1999). At different "sites of contention" in the various societal domains, an emerging ecological culture is struggling to reconstitute discursive, institutional and scientific-technical practices. As we use the term, ecological transformation involves a wide range of activities in different social locations, and it is important to recognize that those activities are, for the most part, governed by different logics, rationalities, motivations, and interests (see box).

Eco logical Transformation: A Schematic Representation

\[ \text{Societal Domain} \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of practice</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Civil Society</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discursive</td>
<td>precautionary principle</td>
<td>pollution prevention</td>
<td>ecological lifestyles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>responsive regulation</td>
<td>environmental management</td>
<td>public participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological</td>
<td>ecological procurement</td>
<td>cleaner production</td>
<td>green consumption</td>
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In our view, ecological transformation is best understood as a wide-ranging and interactive cluster of ideas and activities, resembling what the literary historian Raymond Williams once termed an emerging cultural formation (Williams 1977). It is best seen, we suggest, as an ongoing social process, as distinct combinations of thought and action, of intellectual and practical developments, of cultural struggles and tensions. In order to understand those struggles and tensions, we need to fashion a dynamic language of change agency, by which to identify the myriad processes of coalition-forming, network-building, project-making, and symbolic, or exemplary, action that are often difficult to disentangle and which are seldom examined explicitly. Academic social science is not really able to deal adequately with the cultural dimensions of social change, and it is therefore useful to draw on perspectives that have emerged in the humanities and cultural theory (cf Eyerman and Jamison 1998).

As the dominant, or hegemonic, culture seeks to incorporate environmental concern into its established modes of operation, seeds are also being planted, in the name of sustainable development, for new forms of politics and social interaction. Almost wherever we choose to look, top-down strategies compete with bottom-up approaches in the integration of an environmental awareness into social and economic life. At a diverse range of sites or locations, ecological transformation thus confronts us as a differentiated and often conflict-filled cluster of processes. And while some important attempts have been made to sort out the various theories, or discourses, of the new environmental politics (e.g. Dryzek 1997), little attempt has been made to confront an analysis of the discursive "level" with the variety of practical changes taking place.

**The Importance of Cultural Politics**

The political manifestations of ecological transformation are often in contrast to more established forms of political activity. Ulrich Beck has coined the term "subpolitics" to indicate that indirect forms of political pressure and informal types of political activity have taken on a greater significance, while Maarten Hajer has referred to the
"cultural politics of ecological modernisation" in order to emphasize the symbolic, or cultural, nature of many contemporary environmental conflicts (Beck 1995; Hajer 1996). These include debates about defining programs and conceptualizing ambitions; disputes over the construction and implementation of policy reforms and organizational innovations; and disagreements, both in everyday life, as well as in the wide range of "expert worlds", over how best to develop and implement practical-technical measures.

Subpolitics is political in a less visible or explicit way than the social movement activities that were so characteristic of the 1970s. The "popular campaign" against nuclear energy in Sweden was characterized by mass demonstrations and other forms of direct action, and was organized as a "popular front" with environmental movement organizations joining together with the two parliamentary parties that opposed nuclear energy and other political groupings (Jamison et al 1990). Today, environmental politics consists, to a large extent, of symbolic, or cultural action: the direct action animal rights activists on one extreme practicing an ecological life-style of veganism and youthful anarchy, and the mainstream activists on the other extreme donning the business suits and values of the corporate world. In both cases, and in the myriad combinations to be found in between, environmental activism in Sweden is primarily a politics of performance, discourse and exemplary action.

While being non-conventional, the new types of activism seem somehow representative - even appropriate - for a nonpolitical and commercial era. As social movements have tended to fade from the scene as political actors, a new range of actors have entered the world of environmental politics. These developments have been noted throughout Western Europe (Diani and Donati 1999), but in Sweden, where the political culture has always been centralizing in its dynamics and instrumental in its tone, these transformations have perhaps been particularly noticeable.

On the one hand, there are the transnational actors, both corporate, as well as non-governmental (Greenpeace, WWF), that have been central formulators of the new environmental agenda, and central participants in the quest for sustainable development. In Sweden, the influence of the European Union has been growing in importance, since 1995, when the country became a member; and it is indicatrive that
the new environmental commissioner is an experienced Swedish politician (Margot Wallström).

On the other hand, there are a number of new established actors, in government, business, academic life, as well as in the social movement sector of civil society. The 1990s have witnessed the emergence of a new environmental politics in the guise of ecological modernization, and a new cluster of discourse coalitions, or institutionalized forms of societal practice, that have tended to fill, or replace the public space that was once occupied by environmental movements and movement organizations.

In an attempt to develop further the ideas of subpolitics and symbolic action, Bron Szerszynski has differentiated four forms of what he terms ecological piety, corresponding to different kinds of organizational forms and structuring principles (Szerszynski 1997). Szerszynski distinguishes between purposive and principled action, the one aiming to change political decisions or achieve direct political results, the other oriented more to changing values or behavior. He further distinguishes between counter-cultural and mainstream forms of practice.

There is thus, on the one hand, a “sectarian” piety, which is purposive and counter cultural, characteristic of the direct action groups such as those currently opposing motorway construction and animal experimentation. Secondly, there is a “churchly” piety, which is purposive and mainstream, characteristic of groups such as Greenpeace or the Worldwide Fund for Nature. Here, one participates in environmental politics by paying one’s dues to a professional organization: a green church. Thirdly, there is what Szerszynski calls a “monastic” piety, which is principled and countercultural, characteristic of closely linked groups that develop common “lifestyles” and attempt to practice an ecological way of life. And finally there is a “folk” piety, which is principled and mainstream and characteristic of larger consumer or conservation societies, as well as other mainstream organizations. Here membership, or activism, is much more “part time” than in a social movement, but it is also flexible in its criteria for involvement and participation.

Environmental Organizations in Sweden
The political system in Sweden is often described by political scientists as corporate, or corporatist, as "a situation in which interest organisations participate in the formation and the execution of public policy" (Öberg 1994, p 22). It is often claimed that interest organisations in Sweden have become links between the state and the civil society in a much more significant way than in other countries. In a corporate system the state does not relate directly to the individual citizens, but rather indirectly, through interest organisations. In order to be able to influence politics and participate in the democratic process, citizens are forced to join an interest organisation. Certain organisations are given representation in official bodies and official recognition as negotiation partners for the state agencies. In the Swedish corporate system, the parliament delegates substantial power to the corporate structures, of which it is the interest organisations representing the "labour market partners" - the labour union federations and the employers' associations - which are the most influential. According to Bo Rothstein (1992), an important reason why Sweden to a larger extent than other countries has such a strong corporate system is that in the 1930s - what he terms the "formative moment" - the labour unions were given the right to administer unemployment insurance, which gave them a central role in the making of the Swedish welfare state. Öberg, however, argues that corporatism in Sweden has become problematic, for, in recent years, the strong organisations have come to be seen by many as furthering their own (private) interests to the detriment of society at large (Öberg 1994).

Characteristic for the corporate system in Sweden has been the institutional fusion between the formulation and the implementation of policy. Representatives of various interest organisations are delegated policy making authority by the parliament, most significantly perhaps by participating in the governing boards of the different state agencies. This delegation of power is often legitimated by referring to the need for flexibility and adjustment to particular situations. In such a way, formal interpretation of the law is replaced by a continuous corporate balancing of interests.

According to Rothstein, the intensive contacts between the state agencies and representatives of interest organisations indicate that the state agencies are anything but the neutral instrumental bodies that they often are thought to be:
How the public administration functions is not only a question of rationality and efficiency. Instead it can have a decisive impact on the legitimacy of the political system. The contacts that citizens have with the administrative agencies are by far more numerous than the contacts with the political parties and the members of parliament (Rothstein 1992, p 71).

Rothstein contends that "administrative agencies [not only] play an important role when politicians have decided what they want to realise [but that] what politicians want to realise is to a large extent steered by the administrative conditions" (ibid., 345). State bureaucratic agencies in Sweden have substantial power, and, compared to other countries, the state agencies in Sweden are relatively independent from the government. The agencies have a formal responsibility to the government as a whole, and not to any one ministry or minister.

In his discussion of the corporate character of policy making, Rothstein describes the historical relations between the state and the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (Svenska Naturskyddsföreningen, SNF). SNF was founded in 1909, in part by academics critical of the Royal Academy of Science, which since the 18th century, had been the main organisation providing expertise on conservation and nature protection. Like its counterparts in other countries, SNF argued for stronger conservation laws and for the establishment of nature reserves and parks. But in Sweden, SNF also became a kind of semi-official body. From the 1920s, SNF got a small subsidy from the state and was regularly asked by the government to take part in investigative commissions and policy deliberations. In the 1950s, SNF was given a more official status, by being represented in the management of the Nature Protection Board, and there were even proposals to transform the organisation into a formal state agency. It was decided in the parliament that SNF would replace the Academy of Science in the implementation of nature protection laws. In addition to receiving more resources from the state, the organisation was reformed in order to carry out the new tasks, and state officials became members of SNF’s board. In this way the boundaries between the state and the civil society were blurred. SNF was, for instance, involved in the deliberations in 1962 to decide where the water power agency Vattenfall should build its (hydroelectric) power installations.

When the Environmental Protection Agency was established in 1967 this semi-official status of SNF was largely eliminated, and the association was given a
primarily educational role in what was to become a new environmental policy sector: arranging conferences, producing publications, organising study circles and popular education activities (with state support). Without much discussion in the parliament, the government appointed members from the labour market partners to the new EPA board, rather than representatives from environmental organisations, such as SNF. As a result the EPA came to cooperate closely with industry, rather than with the "old" environmental movement. First in 1988, SNF would be represented on the board of the EPA.

Although SNF’s semi-official status disappeared in the 1960s, contacts between SNF and the government, and the EPA, have not been insignificant through the years, but they have primarily been personal and informal. It is not unusual, for example, that employees of SNF move to the Ministry of the Environment, and vice versa. According to a representative of the Ministry, a couple of current employees previously worked at SNF, and, according to a representative of SNF, several staff members of SNF have earlier worked for the Ministry. The biologist Stefan Edman, now engaged as an adviser and speech-writer for prime minister Göran Persson, is a former vice chairperson of SNF and has been a member of SNF’s expert committee for biodiversity. And the member of the Center party Gunnel Hedman, who represents SNF in the Delegation for the Promotion of Environmentally Adapted Technology, has previously been engaged at the Cabinet Office, when the Center party leader, Olof Johansson was minister of the environment (from 1991 to 1994).

The corporatist political culture has left a strong imprint on the way in which environmentalism has developed in Sweden (Jamison et al. 1990). The hegemony of the Swedish social democratic party has also been important. Although environmentalism has been a very significant political force in Sweden, it has been difficult for an autonomous environmental movement to develop:

(In the 1960s) environmentalism in its initial development was quickly seized upon as an important issue for the governing social democratic party, which handled the matter in the way it knew best: the formation of a new administrative body, research committees, and investigative commissions. Environmentalism was transformed into a legal and technical matter, a process of measuring, mediating, and balancing the various interests involved. At the local or movement level,
environmental problems became a source for revitalising the party organisation, a new issue of study circles and debate and a new topic for experts to specialise in (Ibid, p 194).

In discussing the development of environmentalism in Sweden, we can distinguish five phases: 1) a period of awakening from the late 1950s to about 1967, 2) a brief organizational period from 1968 to 1973, when the new environmentalism took more coherent form in new groups and collective identities, 3) the period of anti-nuclear debate from 1973 to 1980, 4) the emergence of "green" politics in the 1980s, with the creation of the Green Party and the professionalization of activism, and 5) a period of internationalization from the late 1980s to the early 1990s, when environmental organizations increasingly came to focus their attention on the "global environmental agenda" (Jamison 1996). From about 1994, however, we can see a further stage of development, as environmental organizations have more and more taken on the role of "change agents" in various processes of ecological transformation - both in business, government and civil society.

The Phases of Environmentalism in Sweden

The roots of the postwar environmental movement are to be found among the nature conservation organizations, primarily SNF, and, in particular, in its youth organization, the Field Biologists. Compared to other countries, the emergence of the new environmental movement came earlier in Sweden; already in the 1950s, young nature lovers were organizing protest actions against pollution, and when Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* was published in Swedish in 1963, SNF organized a major conference and began to lobby for stronger environmental protection laws. There was a greater continuity in Sweden between what might be termed the old and the new environmental movements. The period of awakening, in which influential Swedish environmental debaters brought the new concerns to widespread public attention, was effectively brought to a close with the creation of the EPA in 1967, and the establishment of new environmental research programs and judicial arrangements (Jamison at al 1990).

As in other countries, however, in the late 1960s and early 1970s a variety of
new environmental organisations were created, which took issue not merely with pollution and urban sprawl, but with the technological culture as a whole. In Sweden, however, there was less influence from the new left than in neighboring Denmark and Norway, and the more general societal critique that was articulated by environmentalists in other countries was fairly marginal in Sweden. The environmentalist message was quickly taken over by the parliamentary Center party, and, from the beginning, the new movement organizations had a difficult time establishing an autonomous movement "public space".

During the 1970s, the environmental debate in Sweden was dominated by the growing opposition to nuclear energy. And that opposition was strongly incorporated into the established political culture, both the organs of the state as well as the political parties. Nowhere else in Europe was anti-nuclear sentiment so deeply "parliamentarised" as it was in Sweden. In particular the Center party’s identification with the issue was a significant factor in elevating the debate to the top of the national political agenda, especially when the party won the parliamentary election in 1976 largely on the basis of its anti-nuclear position. The debate about nuclear energy, dominating the political landscape during the 1970s, was organized in the form of study circles and information campaigns conducted by all political parties and interest organizations, and eventually culminated in a referendum in 1980. The environmental movement organizations never could capture the initiative, and in the referendum campaign, the strong presence of the Center and Communist parties in the "People's Campaign Against Nuclear Energy" became a source of fragmentation and eventually internal dissension.

During the 1980s, a new kind of professional environmentalism developed, with the coming of Greenpeace to Sweden and the entrance into SNF (and the parliamentary political parties) of many of those who had been involved in the movement organisations of the 1970s. At the end of the 1980s, the Green party, which had been created just after the referendum in 1980, made its entry into the parliament.

As Matthias Gustafsson has written, Swedish environmentalism in the early 1990s appeared to be highly successful: "Concern for the environment is very widespread indeed, having consequences also for the market and the everyday behaviour of many citizens. Furthermore, state environmental policies officially declare sustainability as the goal for all activities in society" (Gustafsson 1993, p 39).
Organizations like Greenpeace and SNF, and most recently, WWF, the Swedish branch of the World Wildlife Fund, with their professional, technical and result-oriented approaches, have profited from the increased environmental consciousness, while more democratic organizations have suffered a decline in membership: "[t]he notion of a sustainable development [is] connected to a weakening of the more value-oriented environmental/alternative organisations. The new strong carriers of an environmental consciousness [are] professional, result-oriented organisations, not explicitly advocating radical changes" (ibid, p 37).

According to Lennart Lundqvist, there are more than 50 environmental interest organisations in Sweden (Lundqvist 1996). About half of them are active in eco-technology, eco-information and eco-production, and a quarter consist of associations of environmental professionals. Lundqvist classifies 17 organisations as environmental "movement" organizations. The three largest, SNF, Greenpeace and WWF, together have about 450,000 members (or some 5% of the Swedish population). The smaller movement organizations with a more active profile have only about 20,000 members altogether. With its 185,000 members, SNF is the largest environmental organisation in Sweden. In 1995, 79 persons were employed - full-time or part-time - at the office in Stockholm. In Sweden, SNF is the most powerful environmental NGO, and has many contacts with the state. The main projects of SNF are currently biodiversity, sustainable Sweden and environmentally-friendly consumption. Greenpeace Sweden has about 100,000 supporting members, and was carrying out mainly three campaigns in 1996: a campaign against nuclear energy, a campaign against genetic manipulation and a campaign against environmental poisons. A recent campaign is for the maintenance of a primeval forest in the north of Sweden. At Greenpeace’s office in Stockholm, 18 persons are employed. WWF, the World Wildlife Fund, has about 150,000 members in Sweden, but only one third of its budget is spent on projects in Sweden.

Besides these established environmental and nature protection NGOs, there are various smaller or new organisations, which play a role in environmental policy in Sweden. The Field Biologists (Fältbiologerna) is an organisation with about 10,000 members, and has mainly young people and students as members. Previously, the Field Biologists were a youth organisation of SNF. However, after conflicts with its mother organisation, the Field Biologists became rather independent. Traditionally,
the Field Biologists organise nature excursions and related activities. Also, they launch environmental campaigns, although the Field Biologists are not a typical environmental NGO. Current projects, among others, are an energy project and a primeval forest project.

The Environmental Federation Friends of the Earth (Miljöförbundet Jordens Vänner), has, compared with Friends of the Earth in other countries, few members: in 1995 they had about 2300 members. As a result of lack of personal and financial resources, activities are often on ad hoc basis, for instance when protesting against infrastructure projects, or writing comments on policy proposals.

New NGOs are the network q2000 and The Natural Step. Both NGOs have come into being with the aim to contribute to a sustainable development, following the desire of the World Commission on Environment and Development (the so-called Brundtland commission). The network q2000 has been created after the UNCED conference in Rio, 1992, and engages youth and students in trying to realise a sustainable development, by way of influencing municipalities, companies, the government and the parliament. q2000 aims at the realisation of Agenda 21 on the local, national and international level, by way of "innovative and pioneering ideas". Currently, the network consists of about 700 persons. q2000 has worked very much with the local Agenda 21 projects in Sweden, and is involved in evaluation activities. The network works on a project basis, much like a small consulting firm.

The foundation The Natural Step (Det Naturliga Steget, DNS) has a rather unique position as an environmental NGO. DNS does not try to influence policy, but rather attempts to stimulate companies in developing environmental strategies. DNS uses so-called "consensus documents" which are based on four lifecycle principles. DNS urges companies to accept the validity of these principles, and, as a consequence, that they will be prepared to base and develop environmental strategies on them (Boström 1999). DNS managed with this approach to convince companies like Macdonalds, Electrolux and IKEA of the necessity of a long-term environmental strategy. While it is no novelty that environmental NGOs use scientific knowledge for their activities, DNS has been extremely successful with its approach. However, DNS is also criticised for the way it uses science. According to the physicist Tor Ragnar Gerholm, DNS’s success among companies has given legitimation to what are non-scientific beliefs. DNS founding principles, following Gerholm, can almost be
regarded as an expression of "ecological fundamentalism" rather than science. They have little to do with modern science. Gerholm shows that the four principles violate the laws of thermodynamics.

DNS has organised a number of different professional networks among researchers, engineers, farmers, and business consultants, which have produced consensus documents on various topics. DNS also is establishing networks among lawyers, nurses, secretaries, etc.

The Present Situation: A Division of Labor?

Drawing on the information given to us from interviews with representatives of the leading EMOs in Sweden we see a picture of further specialisation and an implicit division of labour among the organisations. For instance, both Greenpeace and SNF are more and more concentrating their resources on one major campaign a year, rather than trying to influence several different environmental policy issues. Also, the modus operandi differs among the organisations, something that they are all quite aware of. In more concrete terms this means that SNF for instance sees lobbying activities as the main mode to achieve their aims, while Greenpeace relies on their now well known protest activities. Also it means that the organisations sometimes (sub)divide issues among themselves. Representatives from the organisations inform us that they want to be as efficient as possible and that such subdivision of tasks is a good way to be more effective.

Given the fact that on a national level there are relatively few major EMOs, they all know what the others are doing, and they tend to see themselves as competing for potential members, which also encourages a further division of labour among the organisations. As one representative put it, it is better to try to have a reasonable number of members than trying to attract a category of members that do not really feel for the organisation and might leave it at any point. It is seen as important to try to have a solid core of members so that the organisation can have a realistic plan. This goal is best achieved by becoming “…even more explicit on what we are, on our identity”.

Competition among the major member-financed organisations leads to a
tendency to divide the field of environmental activism into different areas in order to tighten the bonds to the particular (potential) member group. Also there is a tendency that the organisations that are financed by industry, such as DNS, have to find their own issue areas that cannot be connected to the issue areas of organisations that are seen as challenging industrial interests.

In addition to the division into issue areas and member constituencies, there is also an important dividing line between the local and the national. There is a difference between seeking influence on the national policy makers (and/or large companies) and conducting action on a more local scale. This is perhaps most obvious when it comes to SNF and the youth organisation, the Field Biologists (*Fältbiologerna*). The Field Biologists are independent of SNF, but SNF is considered to be the “mother organisation”. Members are mostly concerned young people under 25, and the local organisations (groups and clubs) are very free in their relationship to the national association. This given, the protest activities that are carried out by the members of the organisation mostly have a local orientation. The Field Biologists are organised in clubs that can team up in different districts. Further there is a national part of the organisation that mainly has an administrative role. “Think global - act local” is more than just a phrase here. Also, it is important to emphasize that the Field Biologists are a different type of protest organisation than, for instance, Greenpeace. The overwhelming part of their activities take the form of nature excursions, learning and teaching activities, summer camps and the like. Nevertheless, protest activities are seen as an important part of the Field Biologist identity for at least some of the members. In the media coverage analysis on protest events that has been carried out the Field Biologists as an organisation were only represented in 3.7% of the cases during the ten-year period. But given the local and individual engagement of their members this might not say all that much about the actual activities of the members on an individual basis.

SNF, on the other hand, as far as the protest activity carried out by the organisation is concerned, puts much more emphasis on activities on the national level, be it lobbying or campaigns. However, the relationship between the grass-root level and the national are very important also for SNF. For instance, the local levels of the organisation provide information about the “state of nature” in particular areas, information that can be used as “a weapon” in a campaign, according to a national
spokesperson. Also, SNF sees it as important that the local parts of the organisation remain active and put pressure on local policy makers as the main organisation does on a national level. On the other hand, “…of course we cannot communicate directly with 160000 members, all cannot be with us when we go and visit the Ministry of finance, that is obvious” (interview, Nov 1999). The representative of the Field Biologists presented an alternative view, “We are not a top-down organisation /…/ Local action can be very good. We (the administration) only do the boring job. All activities, (protest) action, camps, excursions are arranged by people who work on an idealistic basis.” (interview, Nov 1999)

As for Greenpeace, there is a fundamentally different situation. Being an organisation with only supporting members without influence, Greenpeace has another position in relationship to the local, national (or transnational) problematique. Greenpeace in Sweden has recently joined together with Greenpeace in the other Nordic countries and become Greenpeace Norden. The main office is now in Stockholm and the level of centralisation can be said to be quite high. But, as far as recent protest activities are concerned, Greenpeace has mainly been active in remote parts of Sweden and they see their main role, or identity, as being “in the field”, rather than sitting behind desks in the capital. This is quite interesting when it comes to the media coverage. Greenpeace (9.1%) are not represented as much as for instance SNF (11.2%) in the national media we investigated. The interviewed person at Greenpeace explained this (for him well known fact) by the differences in strategy between the two organisations. Greenpeace does not aim for small notices in newspapers, rather they go for a good coverage in the television news or the tabloids. As they see it, this is a much more effective way to have an impact on the public opinion. Again the different (member) structures of the different organisations is of importance when it comes to what kind of media strategies are to be chosen.

As a member financed organisation it is of importance to “come out” with a message that appeals to a group in society, not necessarily all in the society but a group large enough to carry the organisation (economically as well as politically). Organisations, such as SNF and the Field Biologists, which have a more direct influence coming from their members and also on their members (organising activities etc) need to have an open discussion within the organisation. And since they have a heterogeneous member base, they are consensual in orientation, and are not able to be
too provocative. On the other hand, Greenpeace has a need to show that they are doing what they are getting paid for, that is protesting in “Greenpeace style”. That means that they have a need to communicate with and have an influence on the public opinion broadly speaking. “It is a kind of interaction between an educated elite and the broad mass of the people” (interview, Nov 1999).

As we have observed, there is thus, if not an actual division of labour, at least a division of roles between the major EMOs in Sweden. As suggested here this relates to the organisation’s member status, as well as to how they define their issue areas and also to whom they speak. This of course has certain implications on the activities that are carried out by the organisations.

If we take a brief look on the (still preliminary…) results from the protest event analysis, we see the following.

Names of organisations 1 * issue areas 1 Crosstabulation

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NATURE CONSERVATION</th>
<th>POLLUTION, URBAN &amp; INDUSTRIAL</th>
<th>ENERGY</th>
<th>ANIMAL WELFARE AND HUNTING</th>
<th>TRANSPORT</th>
<th>ALTERNATIVE PRODUCTION ETC.</th>
<th>OTHER</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<td>Fältbiologerna</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenpeace</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Svenska Naturskyddsföringen</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWF</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Org.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>176</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As an example we can here see that SNF is fairly well spread among the various issue areas with the exception of animal welfare and transport. The Field Biologists, on the other hand, are mainly concerned with transport issues when they conduct major protest activities, while Greenpeace keeps its focus in the area of pollution and to a lesser extent energy and alternative production. Even if the table above by no means gives a full picture of the proportions of protest events in Sweden the indications given that there is a division among the organisations when it comes to issue areas.
corresponds with the information given in the interviews, as well as how the organisations present themselves in their own publications.

The tendency to divide up the field of environmental action (activities) between the different organisations is even more apparent if we take a closer look at two other major organisations in Sweden, namely WWF (mainly interested in nature conservation issues) and DNS (the Natural Step, not a protesting organisation at all, consequently only represented once in our material).

The Swedish variant of WWF was established in 1971. A mix of EMOs and actors from business and industry constituted the organisation. Further the present Royal Highness, King Carl Gustav joined the organisation at the start and is now acting as the president. However it was not until the end of the 1980s that the organisation started to attract a larger group of members, today about 150,000 supporting members (Boström 1999). As one could expect, WWF in Sweden does not play a very active role as far as it comes to more demonstrative or confrontational protest action. (Five out of seven of the reported protest activities in the newspaper analysis are in the category “Conventional”.) Instead the organisation keeps its main activities in the realms of supporting research and as a pressure organisation in relationship to business and industry. The dominating issue for the organisation have been the protection of endangered species, both nationally and internationally, today in combination with a more general nature protection policy. This also shows in our material where WWF are mostly represented in the issue area “nature conservation”.

Without going into details about the different activities of WWF one can briefly describe the organisation as an important actor in the arena of environmental policy in Sweden. Saying so one should not underestimate the actual influence WWF has. Even though the organisation identifies itself rather in terms of coexistence, bridge building, and mediation, they play an important role as a critical force within more established realms of policy making. Like SNF, WWF leans quite heavily on its abilities to act as a force through lobbying activities and contacts with the environmental and/or agriculture ministries. The difference between the organisations is that while SNF is rather anxious or at least aware of the role of the media and the relative space that media gives to the issues SNF pushes, WWF are more modest in that respect. This might relate to the two organisations' different membership structures. With its connections to more established realms of Swedish society WWF
might attract rather different members than SNF. Also the relationship to the public (on a local level) is kept at a greater distance than in SNF. WWF's relationship to media is also different if compared to for instance Greenpeace. Getting attention in the media is not important for the organisation as such (recruiting potential members or showing local groups/clubs that something is going on), instead media becomes important when it comes to fund-raising around one particular issue/campaign. Also and not least important, the logic of the “value of news” works against organisations that are interested in collaboration rather than conflicts. This partly explains why WWF hired a full-time press secretary in 1993 with a responsibility for media contacts and the like. This has led to a rise in media interest (five of the seven reported events in our material are from this later period). This new more active position towards the media from WWF also reflects a more general shift in the organisation's strategy. During the last ten years WWF has become more active as an environmental organisation. This role is firmly grounded in good relationships to various actors in the realms of science and research, economics and business, as well as politics and administration. The organisation’s resources, both in personnel, expertise and finances, are relatively high, and the organisation is also flexible in seeking constructive solutions to the problems it chooses to highlight. WWF for instance has played a vital role in the propagation of new concepts such as “sustainable development” and “biological diversity”. Also on the more concrete level WWF has been described as successful in for instance saving endangered spices. (Boström 1999)

The Natural Step will here represent an even more constructive (rather than confrontationist) position. The Natural Step (DNS) was established in 1989 as a foundation and has now become an international organisation with offices in at least seven other industrialised countries. DNS can be described as an organisation that aims towards selling solutions on environmental problems to companies. Within this overarching ambition several different projects and activities are produced, such as courses and advising. This activity can be described as the opposite to the Greenpeace way of working (Boström 1999). DNS see its role as acting as a mediator or “broker” as well as a real resource in processes of environmental adaptation within the business realm. However, it is still a minority of companies that are adopting the organisation and its ideas, and also the organisation seem to have some difficulties in achieving the same kind of contacts with policy makers that the more traditional EMOs have.
The various actors as far as protest activity goes are extremely heterogeneous in Sweden. The EPA lists (1998) more than 60 organisations that are considered to be environmental, the majority of them in the consensus oriented part of the field and close to business and/or industry interests. In the media analysis material on the other hand, there are about 70 organisations mentioned in respect to protest activity, many of them in the more confrontational activities. However, within this heterogeneous picture it is worth noting that the life span for many environmental organisations is rather short, many of them being what could be described as one issue organisations, often with a strong NIMBY character.

Among all the major EMOs there is a tendency to concentrate on fewer campaigns. Another tendency is that the EMOs to work actively with media relations, by focusing on specific strategies to make their action visible to the specific part of the public that is of importance. Consolidation is a key word, in keeping a core group of members in the organisation, rather than spending resources on campaigning in order to get new members.

**Conclusions**

At the same time as many of the leading environmental organisations in Sweden have been undergoing a process of institutionalization, a new wave of activism has also emerged. Among animal rights protesters, militant forms of direct action have been practiced - both against animal experimentation and hunting - that have been closely connected to an emergent vegan life style. There have also been, in relation to local Agenda 21 projects in many municipalities, a form of local project-making that has ranged from recycling facilities and new collective gardens to workshops for ecological design and renewable energy (cf Bovin and Magnusson 1997). These activities are often based on ad hoc groups, that are usually informal networks of representatives from local businesses, local government and environmental or other political groups. It is often "youth organizations" - within the political parties or the larger environmental organisations - that take the lead, or what might be termed the brokerage role, in terms of creating these new, more horizontal networks.
It is thus possible to see three rather distinct strategies, or regimes, emerging in the process of ecological transformation in Sweden, with different roles for environmental organisations to play (see box).

**Regimes of Swedish Environmental Politics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Populist</th>
<th>Corporate</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>locally-based</td>
<td>transnational</td>
<td>national/regional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social learning</td>
<td>management</td>
<td>administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;from below&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;from above&quot;</td>
<td>by sector/region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>horizontal networks</td>
<td>vertical integration</td>
<td>formalized systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community ethos</td>
<td>commercial ethos</td>
<td>bureaucratic ethos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;strong democracy&quot;</td>
<td>market democracy</td>
<td>electoral democracy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the one hand, there are the bottom-up forms of activity that are often connected to projects of local empowerment, or strengthening local democracy or citizenship. On the other hand, there are top-down forms of activity that are sponsored by business firms, where environmental organizations are often given a role to play in projects of environmental production and consumption. State and regional governments, often with the support of European Union funding, are developing what can be considered a third regime, in which ecological transformation is being adapted to the procedures of public administration. Intriguingly, all three regimes are quite visibly cultural or symbolic in their modes of representation, utilizing communications media in their activity. Indeed, many of the new activities take place, to a large extent, in a virtual reality of web sites, emails and internet chats.

In the process of ecological transformation, environmental organizations are developing many new kinds of roles and competencies. And it will be important for the academic observers of environmental politics to develop new concepts and
theories for understanding this strange new world. We hope that this paper has been able to provide some tentative steps in that direction.

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