

## *A Global Network? Transnational Cooperation among Environmental Groups*

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A rich literature theorizes about the development of transnational networks among social movements that may signal the emergence of a new global civil society. This article presents empirical results from an international survey of environmental groups. We find evidence of a relatively dense network of international action by green groups, and a substantial resource transfer from green groups in the OECD nations to those in the developing world. At the same time, the patterns of exchange within this network raise questions about the more optimistic claims of the global civil society literature because participation in this transnational network is largely an extension of the factors that encourage domestic political action. In addition, power inequalities and value differences that exist within this international environmental network may limit transnational cooperation among environmental groups.

Over the past quarter century, environmental activism has become an international activity. The internationalization of environmentalism is exemplified by the creation of numerous elite networks, the formation of international environmental NGOs (ENGOs), and the proliferation of international environmental treaties (Haas 1989; Rootes 1999; Rüdig 1990).

The formation of international networks leads some scholars to suggest that they reflect the onset of a global civil society and cosmopolitan democracy (Archibugi, Held, and Kohler 1998; Lipschutz 1996). James Rosenau, for instance, claims “[social movements] have evolved as well-springs of global governance in recent decades . . . . Social movements are thus constituent parts of the globalization process” (1998, 42). Transnational networks supposedly create new political opportunities for social movements to challenge the political status and its representatives.

A previous version of this paper was presented at the annual workshops of the European Consortium for Political Research, Mannheim, Germany; we thank participants of the workshop for their comments. We also thank Juliann Allison, Mario Diani, David Frank, Herbert Kitschelt, David Meyer, John Meyer, and Sidney Tarrow for their comments.

At the same time, other scholars maintain that optimistic claims about transnational cooperation are overdrawn (Tarrow 1998). Even if groups interact across nations, this fact alone may not indicate that we are moving toward a global civil society because the underlying sources of action may still be based on group-level characteristics. In this vein, the future global civil society may depend on many of the same group characteristics that traditionally have structured domestic policy activity by social movements (Guidry, Kennedy, and Zald 2001). Instead of being an *alternative* to domestic action for a group with limited resources or limited access, transnational action may be primarily a *continuation* of the domestic influence of groups by other, transnational, means.

Despite the importance of these theoretical issues, the academic literature provides unclear guidance on these conflicting interpretations of ENGOs' transnational activities. We see two general problems with prior studies. The first, which we begin to address, is the lack of systematic, empirical assessments about the degree to which ENGOs actually engage in transnational cooperation. Much of the evidence is based on case studies or descriptive evidence of a specific environmental campaign. While case studies are a valuable research methodology on social movements, they provide a limited basis for generalization to overall strategies of action for a movement. Therefore, our initial goal is to provide the first systematic assessment of the actual degree of transnational interaction and cooperation within the environmental movement. To this end, the *Global Environmental Organizations Survey (GEOS)* surveyed 248 green NGOs drawn from 56 nations on five continents.<sup>1</sup>

Beyond describing activity patterns, our theoretical aim is to examine which factors facilitate or limit participation in transnational networks. Here we draw on the extensive social movement literature to distinguish between two general models. One model considers the extent to which several factors associated with the globalization thesis—participation in the international marketplace, national affluence, democratic openness, acceptance of international environmental treaties, international issue focus—influence the international activities of green NGOs. The second model examines the degree to which group characteristics—resources and ideology—drive ENGOs' transnational action. As we will explain below, these two sources of group activism represent different research perspectives and have different implications for how we interpret the activities of green NGOs.

Unfortunately, parts of this literature are ambiguous or contradictory on the causal mechanisms that presumably influence transnational activity. For exam-

<sup>1</sup>The 1998 Global Environmental Organizations Survey (GEOS) was conducted with a grant from the Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation at the University of California, San Diego, and the Center for the Study of Democracy at UC Irvine. We acknowledge their generous support of this research. We also thank Kevin Wallsten and Miki Caul for their research assistance on this project.

ple, the general thrust of the globalization thesis implies that globalization and its attendant social changes encourage greater transnational cooperation among citizen groups. This research might be read to imply that groups from affluent nations will be the major contributors to international networks because they have the ability to participate in them. Conversely, Keck and Sikkink (1998, 1999) suggest a “boomerang” theory whereby domestic groups that are restricted in their effectiveness at the national level will turn to transnational networks in order to pursue their policy goals. This argument implies that groups from *less* affluent countries or nations less open to environmental reform may play a larger part in forming international networks. In addition, the exact mechanisms of causal linkages are seldom discussed in specific terms, which makes it difficult to assess their empirical validity. Globalization is a theoretical concept, more than a testable model.

We readily acknowledge that there are many different variants of the global civil society thesis. However, rather than deal with the broadest implications of the globalization literature, we focus our research on one specific element of this literature: what factors influence the evolution of transnational networks among ENGOS?

In addition to making a contribution to the social movement and environmental politics literature, this research also has implications that reach beyond environmental organizations. We argue, for example, that the extent to which environmental groups interact across nations (and the determinants of action) provides a glimpse into the near future about how other public interest groups—such as women’s groups, human rights groups, and ethnic minorities—may organize to influence governmental policies. We will develop these general implications in the conclusion after we establish the theoretical arguments and test several hypotheses.

## The Theoretical Context

The international growth of public concern with green issues underscores the near-global spread of these issues. Most comparative public opinion studies describe a broad international consensus on the need to protect the environment (e.g., Dunlap, Gallup, and Gallup 1993; Inglehart 1995). Paralleling an apparently spreading consciousness about environmental protection, the environmental movement itself is developing a global presence. Initially, environmental groups were active in advanced industrial democracies (Dalton 1994; Diani 1995; Finkel and Muller 1998; Lowe and Goyder 1983), but these groups have spread into the developing nations. During the last decade, environmental groups proliferated in Latin America (Keck and Sikkink 1998; MacDonald 1997). The democratization trend in Eastern Europe was closely intertwined with the development of autonomous environmental groups (DeBardleben and Hannigan 1995). And from the rainforests of Southeast Asia to the debate on economic development projects in the rest of Asia, environmental activism grew in

this region. Symbolizing the new global presence, green groups from about 100 nations participated in the Rio and Kyoto Summits.

At the international level, a growing number of international NGOs have formed in recent decades to lobby international policy makers, ranging from the European Union (Rootes 1999) to the United Nations (Meyer et al. 1997).<sup>2</sup> Similarly, while there were fewer than 40 international environmental bodies in 1945, the number has increased exponentially and now encompasses approximately 200 (Frank et al. 1999).

### *The Extent of Transnational Cooperation*

Despite these developments, the hard evidence on the degree of transnational action within the movement is ambiguous. Although there are frequent claims of such cooperation, much of the evidence focuses on single groups or a specific campaign. In addition, while the literature offers examples of cooperation across national borders, scholars are less likely to write about cooperative efforts that failed (or those possible cooperative activities that never developed).

Furthermore, there are several reasons to be skeptical about the actual degree of transnational action, especially for environmental groups from the developing world. For one, many groups in the developing world are resource poor, and international travel and international networking can be expensive. It is therefore unclear whether the groups that do participate in international networks are typical of the overall movement. Several scholars also argue that social movements must be oriented toward domestic politics, not the international arena, in order to succeed (Guidry, Kennedy, and Zald 2001; Tarrow 1998). They maintain that green NGOs must be primarily concerned about domestic issues because therein lies the primary source of funding and political support for citizen groups. Usually, groups must also focus on lobbying the national (and local) governments because this is the locus for policy making on the issues of greatest relevance to their constituency.<sup>3</sup>

There are also signs of latent political tensions between environmental groups from the developed North and those in developing nations (e.g., Gardner 1995; van der Heijden 1999). Ann Hudock's (1999) comparison of North/South relations within NGO networks is full of cautions about how Southern NGOs can suffer from goal displacement and loss of legitimacy if they develop too strong a dependence on the support of Northern NGOs. In short, there are many incentives for green NGOs to focus their energies domestically instead of inter-

<sup>2</sup>Meyer et al. (1997) define international environmental organizations as those that are established by official agreements (e.g., a treaty) that include three or more nations, such as the North Pacific Fisheries Commissions. These are not international NGOs in the way we discuss movement organizations in this research.

<sup>3</sup>Other scholars have argued that the potential for international policy action is limited in the absence of strong international institutions that can enforce such agreements (Haas, Keohane, and Levy 1993).

nationally. Therefore, although transnational activity is apparently increasing, our first goal is to determine the actual degree of such activity among these groups.

A final issue involves the character of transnational action. Even if ENGOs are engaged in transnational networks, there are different types of activity within these networks. Communication and interchange are the most basic aspects of transnational networks, but more is involved. The exchange of resources or expertise makes some groups suppliers in the network, and other groups are consumers. These patterns create new sources of differentiation within the environmental movement. While previous research has not fully distinguished between such activities, we will draw out these contrasts and their potential implications in our analyses.

### *Explaining Transnational Cooperation*

Beyond determining the level of transnational activity, we examine two possible explanations for the degree and pattern of international cooperation: a globalization approach, and an approach that emphasizes the effects of group characteristics. This section discusses several elements of each approach as they pertain to ENGOs' transnational activism.

GLOBALIZATION THESIS. The globalization explanation functions at multiple levels. One approach suggests that growing transnational cooperation is due to the increasing importance of international environmental problems. Because air pollution, for example, does not stop at national boundaries, environmental NGOs must cooperate across borders in order to improve environmental conditions. Indeed, the institutional context of environmental policy encourages such transnational interaction. International bodies, ranging from the United Nations Environmental Program to specific commissions, such as the International Whaling Commission or the International Tropic Timber Organization, give an international focal point to many environmental issues. From this perspective, attention to international and global environmental issues should be the major driving force behind the development of transnational cooperation.

Another element of the globalization thesis views international cooperation as a deeper structural change that is creating a global civil society (e.g., Held 1998; Wapner 1996). Simply put, modernization creates a sophisticated communications and transportation infrastructure that facilitates international exchange. In such contexts, environmental groups can more readily share information, technology, and resources with groups in other nations. This perspective implies that we should find greater international activity by citizen groups in nations that are more integrated into the global economic and political systems. Thus, social conditions that facilitate and empower citizen groups, such as affluence and educational levels, should also stimulate transnational cooperation. In addition, nations that are more integrated into the international

trade regime and the international environmental policy regime would prompt environmental groups to be internationally active—either to take action against international firms that are affecting their nation or because all political life involves a greater international component.

At the same time, another variant of the globalization thesis suggests that globalization can be an empowering force for groups especially in *developing* nations (e.g., Archibugi, Held, and Kohler 1998; Lipschutz 1996). For example, environmental groups in Russia and the Ukraine can interact with Western groups to gain expertise on nuclear pollution issues. Groups in Europe and Latin America can collaborate on the protection of the Amazon basin. These transnational networks can be especially important for groups in the developing world because they offer a new and important source of political resources, and transnational networks may provide an alternative to domestic policy processes that are blocked by traditional economic and social interests. This process is most clearly articulated in Keck and Sikkink's (1998, 1999) boomerang hypothesis, in which groups in developing nations who are blocked from domestic policy access turn to transnational networks to pursue their policy goals with the aid of external allies.

It is difficult to generate a simple empirical test of the boomerang hypothesis, though it suggests that national affluence and educational levels do not increase ENGO participation in transnational networks. Indeed, the theory predicts that groups in the developing world may gain the most by seeking transnational allies and thus be more likely to engage in transnational networks. Through the consideration of national characteristics and domestic political conditions, we should be able to see if there is evidence of such processes in our data.

**GROUP CHARACTERISTICS THESIS.** An alternative to the globalization thesis is the social movement literature that sees transnational action primarily as an extension of domestic politics to another arena. Tarrow (1998), for example, suggests that the factors that encourage groups to be active in local and national politics very likely carry over to international activity. Large groups with substantial resources are better able to pursue a variety of national lobbying activities (Shaiko 1999; Zald and McCarthy 1987). If resources are important in determining activity levels—especially in costly international activities—then the same groups that are active participants in national politics may be those most likely to engage in international actions. Thus, international action may not be a substitute for domestic action, but may just be the continuation of movement activity at another level.

Similarly, the ideology of an environmental group shapes its patterns of national political activity and may also influence international activity (Dalton 1994; Larana, Johnston and Gusfield 1994). Just as individual activists—or ordinary citizens—may be guided by a system of values, a group's commitment to a certain kind of environmental protection influences their activities.

Nature conservation groups are drawn to working within established government channels given that their goals normally do not pose a major challenge to the dominant social paradigm. Their goals are more moderate, more easily integrated with industrial policy priorities, and less likely to invoke opposition from economically based interest groups. ENGOs whose notion of environmental protection represents a challenge to the dominant paradigm may be more likely to engage in international activities because these groups may find it necessary to look beyond their national border for allies who support their principles.

Empirically, such a group-based approach suggests that group resources and group ideology, rather than common globalization forces, influence which groups actually participate in transnational networks. Thus, there may be substantial variation within the movement in the degree of transnational activity and the type of activity across groups *within* nations. Moreover, if ideology is a significant factor, it would imply that there are potential ideological cleavages within the environmental movement in the resort to international actions and in the goals of such actions (a factor we discuss below).

Of course, the globalization and group-based models are not mutually exclusive; both may affect the patterns of activity within the environmental movement. We believe, however, that the analytical distinction between the two perspectives enables us to sharpen our understanding of the nature and implications of transnational activism by ENGOs. If national affluence, for example, is the primary driving force underlying the formation of international networks among environmental NGOs, one would expect a fairly one-sided transfer of resources from the affluent nations to lesser developed countries. In contrast, a more complex picture emerges if group-based characteristics are the predominant force structuring transnational action networks. This would provide the backdrop against which groups sharing an environmental philosophy may forge alliances across nations against opposing interest groups within the same nations. Both perspectives thus offer different interpretations of this activity and suggest different patterns in the causal processes and political implications of international activity.

### The Global Environmental Organizations Survey

Nearly all of the systematic empirical studies of environmental groups have focused on advanced industrial democracies (e.g., Lowe and Goyder 1983; Dalton 1994; Diani 1995). When one goes beyond the OECD nations, however, the information on ENGOs is much less extensive. Sometimes there are reports on the movement in a single nation, but more often the literature only reports on a specific campaign or the experience of a single group.

This study provides the first systematic assessment of the activities of environmental organizations that reaches beyond the OECD nations. We compiled a list of the major environmental NGOs in the OECD nations and in a set of



nations from the developing world. Because discussions of global environmentalism often focus on North/South issues that involve Latin America, and because the democratic rights necessary to develop NGOs exist in most nations, we saw Latin America as an important region to represent environmental groups in the developing world. The former communist nations of Eastern Europe and the CIS provide another natural basis to study how environmental groups are developing in these nations and whether these NGOs participate in transnational networks. In addition, we purposely selected other nations in East Asia that might have significant environmental movements and chose not to include most nations in Africa or the Middle East.<sup>4</sup> Using a variety of handbooks and Internet sources, we compiled a sampling base of environmental groups in 56 nations on five continents.<sup>5</sup> Our criteria for inclusion were that a group be an established environmental NGO, have broad political interests, and actively participate in national politics. We attempted to exclude groups with purely local or regional interests, as well as groups with single interests such as anti-nuclear groups.

We developed a four-page mail questionnaire that examined several issues: the issue interests of the group, their evaluation of the policy performance of national political institutions, their use of various types of political activity, and the organizational characteristics of the group. Many of these questions replicated earlier research on European environmental groups (e.g., Dalton 1994). In addition, we included several questions assessing the transnational activities of each group—the focus of this article.

We mailed the questionnaire (in either English or Spanish) in two mailings to environmental groups during 1998. The database began with 698 groups; 51 questionnaires were eventually returned by the post office because the group

<sup>4</sup>In large part, this was because the lack of effective democracies in most of these nations limited the development of autonomous environmental groups. For example, the Freedom House listed only one sub-Saharan nation as fully free from 1990 through 1998, and a handful more that were consistently at least partly free during this period. In addition, the prior research needed to identify the major environmental groups, if they existed, is substantially less developed for these regions.

<sup>5</sup>We relied on a variety of handbooks to identify potential groups: Brackley (1990), Deziran and Bailey (1993), Katz, Orrick, and Honing (1993), Ruffin, McCarter, and Upjohn (1996), Trzyna, Margold, and Osborn (1996), and the membership list of the European Environmental Bureau, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, and the international affiliates of World Wildlife Fund, Greenpeace, and Friends of the Earth. We could identify fairly easily the important national groups in the developed world because in most nations there were a handful of “major” national actors and information on these groups was readily available from multiple sources. In most of the developing world, however, the information from handbooks and other sources was scanty and often contradictory. In these cases, when we were uncertain about the political significance of an NGO from a developing nation, we included it in the sample. Thus, the number of surveyed groups in many nations with fragmented movements was actually larger than for many western European nations. In the case of Canada, a second mailing mistakenly was not sent to these groups, which depressed response rates. An electronic listing of the groups is available from the authors upon request.



no longer existed or did not have a forwarding address.<sup>6</sup> We received a completed questionnaire from 248 environmental groups representing 56 nations (the distribution of groups across nations is presented in the Appendix). This yields a response rate of 38%, which we consider a low estimate of the actual response rate among significant national groups. In developing nations, the information on ENGOs is less reliable and the movement is fragmented into small and fluid groups, making the identification of active groups less precise.<sup>7</sup> We believe that the effective response rate for our survey, if such factors could be accurately estimated, would be significantly higher. Furthermore, there is a broad diversity of both nations represented in the survey (see Appendix) and groups within nations. For instance, our sample includes Greenpeace affiliates from the United States, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Russia, Australia, and New Zealand. We received replies from World Wildlife Fund affiliates in Austria, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Australia, Britain, India, and Japan. A diversity of national groups is also included in our survey. The combined membership of our groups exceeds 20 million environmentalists, spread around the globe. Thus, we feel that the Global Environmental Organizations Survey (GEOS) provides a reasonable basis for making initial estimates about the behaviors and orientations of environmental groups in broad international terms.

### Transnational Networks

To estimate the degree of transnational action, the GEOS contains a battery of questions on these activities:

*"How active has your group been in international environmental activities? During the past 2–3 years, how often has your group participated in the following activities?"*

We distinguish between six regions in presenting our findings. The North American category consists of groups from the United States (mostly) and Canada. Latin America, Western Europe and Eastern Europe are self-explanatory labels (see the Appendix for exact nations and the number of groups within

<sup>6</sup>One of the complications of an international mail survey is the uncertain reliability of the postal system in some nations. For instance, approximately half of these returns came after the second mailing, suggesting that many questionnaires from the first mailing had not been delivered.

<sup>7</sup>For instance, our database identifies 40 prospective environmental groups from Brazil, but only 11 for Germany. We received responses from six of the German NGOs (54%) but from only seven of the Brazilian groups (18%). Many of the nonresponses from Brazil likely occurred because many small Brazilian groups in our initial database have ceased to function since their inclusion in an earlier environmental handbook. For example, the smallest of the German mass-membership groups we surveyed has 110,000 members, whereas the largest of the Brazil membership groups has only 20,000 members. The evidence from our two waves of mailing suggests that the return of undeliverable questionnaires is less reliable in developing nations, so nonexistent groups were not reported.

TABLE 1  
The Frequency of Transnational Activities

Activity	North America	Western Europe	Pacific Rim	Latin America	East Europe	Asia
Met groups from other nations to exchange information	81.0	89.6	76.9	89.2	92	100
Met groups from other nations to coordinate activities	66.7	76.0	57.7	67.2	75.0	70.0
Attended international conferences	81.0	82.3	69.2	80.6	87.5	100
<b>Communication Index</b>	71.5	74.0	50.0	69.8	78.1	78.8
Dealt with an international agency	76.2	53.7	46.2	72.7	39.1	77.8
Received technical resources from agency/groups outside nation	61.9	56.3	46.2	80.6	70.8	72.7
Received money from groups/agency outside own nation	21.1	26.6	7.7	64.6	83.3	54.4
<b>Recipient Index</b>	26.3	22.4	15.4	60.0	66.7	54.6
Provided technical resources from agency/groups outside nation	71.4	69.5	57.7	63.6	43.5	33.3
Provided money to groups/agency outside own nation	40	29.5	11.5	3.2	21.7	0
<b>Supplier Index</b>	40.0	30.9	23.0	6.4	8.7	0.0
(N of Cases)	19–21	90–96	90–96	62–65	22–26	10–11

*Note:* Entries are percentages of groups that engage in an activity “often” or “sometimes.” The Communication Index (ranging from 3 to 12) presents the percentage with scores 3–6, the Recipient and Supplier indices (2–8) present scores 2–4.

each nation). The Pacific Rim contains groups from Australia, Japan, and New Zealand. Finally, Asia contains groups from Turkey, India, South Korea, and China.

There is considerable interaction across national boundaries (Table 1). The first several items in the table tap general involvement in international exchange, such as meeting with other groups to exchange information or coordinate activities, participating in international conferences, or dealing with an international agenda. In nearly all of these areas around the globe, a majority of NGOs say they are fairly active in exchanging information and in coordinating their activities with groups or agencies from other nations. For example, we created an index to summarize the levels of action on the first three items in the table (and ultimately to provide dependent variables for the regression

analyses).<sup>8</sup> We find that 71.5% of North American groups scored high on the Communicator Index and that a roughly comparable number of groups in other regions score high on this index (except for groups from the Pacific Rim, 50.0%).

The last four items in Table 1 describe specific types of transnational interactions. For instance, we asked groups whether they received technical resources or money from a group or agency outside their nation or whether they provided technical resources or money to groups or agencies from other nations. There is a very high level of technical exchange among environmental groups—on both the provision and receipt of such support. But there is also a predictable asymmetry to this exchange. If we take the simple percentage difference between the provision and receipt of resources, the balance (in percent) is positive in North America (+9.5), Western Europe (+13.2), and the Pacific Rim (+11.5)—these groups say that they are more likely to supply technical assistance than to receive it. There is a negative balance for groups from the developing world: Latin America (−17), Eastern Europe (−27.3), and Asia (−37.5).

The imbalance of transnational interactions is even clearer for financial exchanges. American NGOs, for example, are about twice as likely to provide funds to an external actor (40%) as to receive external funding (21.1%). Western European groups are also net exporters of funds. In contrast, groups in the developing world acknowledge their acceptance of external funding; the provide/receive imbalance is quite large: Latin America (−61.4), Eastern Europe (−61.6), and East Asia (−54.4). The overall contrasts between the Supplier Summary Index and the Recipient Summary Index reinforce the conclusion that environmental groups from affluent democracies (North America, Western Europe, and the Pacific Rim) are more likely to supply resources, while groups from developing nations are more likely to receive resources from this transnational network.

In a mail questionnaire we could not probe to determine which groups were supplying resources to which groups. But we did use another question to learn whether international exchanges were with neighboring nations, within the region, or on a broader international scale (Table 2). When asked about the scope of their transnational activities, a majority of groups in every region indicate that their contacts involve both groups from neighboring countries and groups from outside their region. What is noteworthy is that many groups—especially

<sup>8</sup>We factor analyzed the participation indicators for the pooled groups. These analyses generally produced one powerful first factor that explains 46.5% of the variance. The rotated solution suggests the three factors described in the text. We constructed three separate indicators (as opposed to one overarching one) in order to examine the scope and sources of various activities across regions and groups. The Communicator Summary Index is an additive index of items 1, 2, and 3 (in Table 1) and ranges from 3 (many contacts with other groups) to 12 (no contacts with other groups). The Recipient Summary Index (based on items 5 and 6 in Table 1) ranges from 2 (a group receives both types of resources) to 8; the Supplier Summary Index (based on items 7 and 8) also ranges from 2 to 8.

TABLE 2  
The Geographic Scope of Group Activities

Group has:	North America	Western Europe	Pacific Rim	Latin America	East Europe	Asia
No international contacts	0	2.2	8	4.6	0	0
Contacts mostly with groups in neighboring countries	4.8	23.1	16	12.3	20.8	9.1
Contacts with groups in neighboring countries and outside region	61.9	65.9	72	63.1	70.8	90.9
Contacts mostly with groups outside region	33.3	8.8	4	20	8.3	0
(N of Cases)	21	91	25	65	24	11

*Note:* Entries represent percentages.

American NGOs—say that most of their contacts are with groups outside their region. The questionnaire categories do not permit us to pinpoint with greater precision the geographic focus of various groups, but this response pattern suggests that there is a genuine international component to these activities.

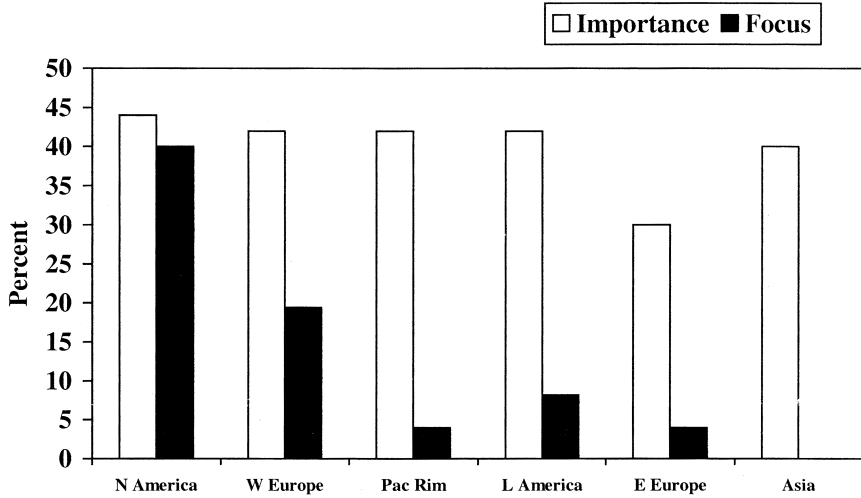
These data provide the first systematic empirical evidence of the actual density of transnational action within the environmental movement. Most contemporary environmental groups engage in a significant amount of such activity. Reinforcing this conclusion, another question in the survey found that 45% of groups say they “often” interact with international NGOs: a level of contact higher than with national commissions, formal meetings with national government representatives, parliament, or national political parties (Dalton 1994).

### Predicting Transnational Activity

Which factors best predict ENGOs’ transnational activities? This section first discusses the translation of our globalization and group-characteristics approaches into specific measures and then evaluates them in multivariate regression analyses.

One aspect of the globalization thesis predicts that growing concern for international environmental problems stimulates participation in transnational networks. Groups that are concerned about international issues, such as global warming or depletion of the ozone layer, are presumably more likely to be involved in international activities addressing these problems. In contrast, groups that focus on domestic wildlife and conservation issues might concentrate on national political activities and national networks.

FIGURE 1  
 ENGOs' International Orientation, by Region



*Note:* The “importance” variable is the average ascribed to global warming and ozone depletion as an issue of vital importance to the group; the “focus” variable presents the percentage of groups that say they focus on international issues over national issues.

Two questions in the survey tap ENGOs' international orientation. The first question asked group representatives to rate the importance of a variety of environmental issues to the group. Figure 1 shows the average percentage that ranked global warming and ozone depletion as vital issues.<sup>9</sup> These data indicate a broad concern for international environmental issues across all regions, with attention levels slightly above average in the developed world.

<sup>9</sup>The survey asked group representatives to rate the importance of six environmental issues to their group; the issues were selected to include three international issues and three domestic issues that might be relevant across the nations in our study. We factor analyzed the six issues; global warming and ozone depletion loaded together on a single factor. The one other item with an international referent, global biodiversity, did not load with the other items; therefore, we did not include it in the index. The score in Figure 1 is the average percentage that rated global warming and ozone depletion as a vital issue for their group. Two other items, protecting wildlife and protection natural areas, formed a second factor that we interpreted as interest in domestic environmental concerns. Validating our interpretation of these issues, interest in the international issues is strongly correlated with the international focus question ( $r = .30$ ) in Figure 1, and concern with the domestic issues is negatively related to an international focus ( $r = -.32$ ).

While interest in global environmental issues appears widespread, the link between issue interests and transnational action is unclear. For example, a group concerned with global warming may focus on reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions within its own nation. Thus, while this NGO is concerned with an international issue, it may work for solutions primarily at the national level. Likewise, a group may be concerned with wildlife protection, which suggests an emphasis on domestic politics. But if this group focuses on the global economic forces as a threat to wildlife, it may work on international issues, such as the destruction of forests in Latin America and Southeast Asia. In short, the issue focus may suggest a group's geographic perspective, but this alone cannot be taken as evidence for its orientation toward political action.

Another question in the survey, therefore, asked whether groups primarily focus on national or international environmental issues (the second bar in Figure 1).<sup>10</sup> There are substantial regional differences in these international orientations. For example, in North America, 40% of the groups focus more on international issues than on national issues. International orientations are less frequent in Western Europe and the Pacific Rim, but even here international issues are important to a substantial number of NGOs. In contrast, these issues receive much less attention in Eastern Europe and Latin America. Among Asian NGOs, no group adopts a primarily international orientation.

A broader version of the globalization thesis suggests that the sources of NGO transnational cooperation run much deeper than simple issue interests (Lipschutz 1996; Wapner 1996; Young 1994). We acknowledge that any test of this aspect of the globalization thesis is necessarily indirect because the causal forces (and the theoretical literature) are broad and diffuse. However, as our theoretical discussion indicates, one variant of this literature generally argues that international cooperation would be more common among nations that are more closely tied to the global marketplace, as measured by trade as a share of GNP. Another measure of integration in the global political network may be a nation's participation in international environmental agreements; we expect more transnational ENGO action in nations that participate in the creation of the global environmental regime. We also include a measure of nations' affluence (measured by PPP/capita) in order to gauge whether other national characteristics discussed by the globalization literature influence ENGOs' transnational activism. Finally, we include the extent of democracy in a nation as a potential influence on the ability of ENGOs to engage in transnational (as well as national) politics because important variants of the globalization literature tend to link the growth of transnational activism to the global spread of democratic

<sup>10</sup>The question was worded as follows: "To what extent is your group primarily concerned with national environmental issues versus issues of an international or global nature?" Respondents were then presented with five choices ranging from (1) primarily concerned with national issues, to (5) primarily concerned with international issues.

structures (Guidy, Kennedy, and Zald 2001).<sup>11</sup> Including each of these variables in a multivariate model should enable us to determine which aspect of these globalization forces have the greatest impact on transnational patterns of action.

The group-characteristics model suggests a different set of causal forces. This model predicts that participation in transnational activities depends on the same forces that lead groups to participate in national politics (Tarrow 1998). The social movement literature has generally stressed the importance of resources in explaining the behavior of social movement organizations (Shaiko 1999; Zald and McCarthy 1987). Simply stated, groups with substantial resources have a greater ability to attend international meetings, to participate in transnational activities, and to provide resources for less endowed environmental groups. In other words, the key factor is not globalization but simply the resources a group possesses that enable it to expand patterns of action to the international level. The multivariate analyses below will help us to determine whether a group's budget explains transnational activism even after we control for national affluence (a measure of globalization).

More generally, one might expect that if international activity is the extension of national activity patterns, then activity levels in both arenas should be positively correlated. To a degree, this thesis questions the "boomerang" theory of social movement action, which suggests that blocked political opportunities, especially in less democratic nations, will lead ENGOs to be more active at the international level (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Risse-Kappen 1994). We can evaluate this hypothesis by comparing national and international activity levels of environmental groups.

Social movement research also maintains that group identities and ideology are important in structuring the behavior of social movement organizations. We hypothesize that groups with a social change orientation would be more likely to participate in the international community where they would be more likely to find support from other progressive environmental groups and foundations.

In summary, these two broad models of transnational action are not mutually exclusive, but because of their different theoretical and political implications they are distinct models. Research should determine the relative importance of each, which is our objective in the analyses that follow.

### *The Multivariate Models*

To evaluate these different models of transnational activism, we conducted three regression analyses to explain international communication, receipt of

<sup>11</sup>Another issue is whether participation in the international environmental regime will encourage democracy, especially in democratizing nations. While we accept the premise of this effect, at this point we are focused on the causal flow in the other direction, which presumably influences the tactics chosen by NGOs.



resources, and supply of resources (Table 3). Our statistical analyses include indicators of the two aspects of the globalization thesis and the group characteristics thesis:

### Issue Orientation

Interest in international issues  
International issue focus

### Globalization Processes

Trade as a % of GDP  
# Environmental treaties  
PPP/capita in 1997 (log)  
Democracy rating

### Group Characteristics

Group budget  
Domestic political activity  
Environmental ideology  
Year founded

In order to show how relationships change when other factors are controlled (and as an indicator of potential multicollinearity), we include the Pearson  $r$  for each bivariate relationship in the first column for each model.

The regression models suggest that on the whole, factors linked to group characteristics offer a stronger explanation of the levels of transnational activ-

TABLE 3

### Predicting Dimensions of Transnational Activity

Predictor	Communicate		Recipient		Supplier	
	$r$	beta	$r$	beta	$r$	beta
<i>Issue Orientation</i>						
International issues	.07	-.07	-.03	-.09	.09	.11
International focus	.24	.24*	.05	.15*	.20	.19*
<i>Globalization Process</i>						
Trade as % GNP	.00	.06	-.18	.07	.26	.12
Environmental treaties	-.05	-.15	-.37	-.18	.28	.05
PPP/capita, 1997 (log)	-.07	-.18	-.46	-.45*	.26	.12
Democracy rating	-.04	.06	-.33	-.05	.30	.13
<i>Group Characteristics</i>						
Annual budget (log)	.28	.32*	-.01	.27*	.44	.34*
National activism	.34	.28*	.21	.16*	.24	.10
Ecologist orientation	.20	.21*	-.10	.01	-.02	-.17*
Year founded	.01	.01	-.18	-.08	.26	.09
Multiple R		.54		.58		.55

Table entries are the simple bivariate Pearson  $r$  for each relationship and the standardized (beta) coefficients from a multiple regression analysis. Regression coefficients significant at the  $p = .05$  level are denoted by an asterisk.

ity. NGOs with larger annual budgets are more likely to communicate with other NGOs outside their nation ( $\beta = .32$ ), to provide resources to other environmental groups ( $\beta = .34$ ), and to receive resources ( $\beta = .27$ ). This last coefficient likely occurs because *controlling for other factors*, groups that receive support from outside their nation have greater financial resources. Even in a developing nation, it is often the case that a group has to be successful, relative to its peers, before it can gain financial sponsors from international actors.

An even more direct sign that transnational activism is the extension of domestic politics comes from correlating activity in both areas.<sup>12</sup> National activism has a strong positive effect on participation in transnational communication ( $\beta = .28$ ) and receipt of international resources ( $\beta = .16$ ); there is also a positive coefficient for supplying resources, though it falls just short of our significance level ( $p < .05$ ). This is another sign that groups that are prominent and successful within their nation are also more likely to become active in the international arena.

Another finding supporting the group-model is that environmental ideology also influences international activity. We distinguished between ecologist and conservation groups: ecologist groups are more likely to hold a reformist orientation toward the economy and the political system, while conservation groups accept the dominant social paradigm and often focus on wildlife or nature conservation issues.<sup>13</sup> Ecologist groups are more likely to participate in international communications. At the same time, the more conventional conservation groups are more likely to be resource suppliers, perhaps because they tend to be larger, older, and more established NGOs. These groups are the resource suppliers within the OECD democracies (Dalton 1994), and this pattern evidently extends to NGOs in the developing world as well.

We attempted to test two separate elements of the globalization thesis. First, we considered whether attention to international issues leads ENGOs to participate in transnational networks. A self-expressed focus on international issues (from Figure 1) significantly increases activity on each dimension ( $\beta = .24$ ). Although there is a degree of circularity to this relationship, this result supports one central variant of the globalization thesis: when NGOs view environmental problems mainly as an international issue, these priorities are translated into transnational cooperation. In contrast, issues per se do not necessarily gen-

<sup>12</sup>This measure is an additive count of the frequency of activity in three areas: formal meetings with government officials, informal meetings with government officials, and participation in government committees and commissions. For additional analyses of activity in domestic politics, see Dalton, Rohrschneider, and Reccia (2001).

<sup>13</sup>Following the coding guidelines in Dalton (1994), the project team coded most groups as following either an ecologist orientation, such as Friends of the Earth or Greenpeace, or a conservationist orientation toward environmental reform, such as bird societies or cultural preservation groups.

erate transnational action; interest in the issues of global warming and ozone depletion are essentially unrelated to action.<sup>14</sup>

The other aspect of the globalization thesis links national characteristics to participation in transnational networks. The most direct test of national involvement in globalization processes is a nation's participation in the global economy and in international environmental agreements. Neither of these factors is strongly or consistently related to transnational activity. The nation's participation in international trade, for example, is virtually unrelated to action patterns.<sup>15</sup> Participation in the international environmental policy regime—as represented by the nation's participation in international environmental treaties—has a weak tendency to discourage communication and recipient activities.<sup>16</sup> In addition, the extent of democratic rights in a nation barely affects the patterns of action.<sup>17</sup>

Another aspect of the globalization thesis links economic development levels to patterns of participation in transnational networks. We do find that groups in affluent nations are significantly less likely to receive resources ( $\beta = -.45$ ) and engage in international communication ( $\beta = -.18$ ), perhaps because the need for external allies is less. Moreover, this relationship holds even while controlling for the financial resources of the individual groups.

If we pair the results of group budget and national economic conditions (PPP/capita), we can separate the impact of groups resources from the national context. The regression results suggest that most groups in poor nations seek external resources because low national income is related to the receipt of resources, but the better funded groups are more likely to be the recipients. In contrast, a group's budget—rather than national conditions—is important in determining whether an ENGO will be a resource supplier. In addition, the more prosperous groups in the less affluent nations provide the links to international communication. This likely occurs because resource-rich groups in nations such as Brazil or Ecuador are better able to engage in international networks and tap the flow of resources from the OECD nations and international sources.

<sup>14</sup>About one-tenth of our groups are affiliates of a "multinational" environmental network such as World Wildlife Fund, Greenpeace, or Friends of the Earth. These groups are more likely to engage in communications ( $r = .19$ ) and supply resources ( $r = .12$ ), but not to receive resources ( $r = .01$ ). We did not include this variable in our multivariate analyses because of multicollinearity with other variables and because of the small N for these groups.

<sup>15</sup>This is a measure of international trade as a percentage of GPD; the source is the *World Bank Development Report*. We also used international capital flows as an alternative indicator of participation in the international economy, and this yielded comparable results.

<sup>16</sup>This is a count of whether a nation has signed, and then ratified, a set of 15 recent international environmental agreements.

<sup>17</sup>Our measure of democracy is the average of the 1997 political rights, civil rights, and human rights scores compiled by Freedom House (1998). The scale was inverted so that 1 equals low democratic rights, and 7 high democratic rights.

Taken together, this result tends to undercut the claimed boomerang effect, which supposes that groups in the less open societies, or less developed nations, turn to international allies as a way to circumvent resistance from their own government and other national political actors. Some green groups in the less democratic nations certainly turn to international allies when they are blocked by domestic political forces; but when other groups confront this same situation they apparently renew their efforts to deal with these challenges within the national systems. Thus, democratic conditions and participation in international environmental agreements are generally unrelated to international action. In fact, the groups that are most active in dealing with national governments through conventional channels are also more likely to engage in each form of international activity. We have no doubt that the boomerang pattern might occur in some instances, but this pattern generally does not describe patterns of international environmental action.

### The Implications for International Environmentalism

This research contributes to our understanding of transnational social movements by providing evidence on the actual patterns of international action by environmental NGOs across five continents. Green groups report a relatively dense network of international communication, and these are common activities for ENGOs in virtually every region of the globe. The sharing of information, the discussion of common problems, and the search for allies beyond national borders are important to the potential policy success of the green movement. On the surface, these data seem to substantiate claims of emerging transnational social movements and a global civil society.

At the same time, however, our empirical analyses raise questions about using globalization theories as the primary explanation of international activism. We find that international activity is to a considerable degree an extension of the same factors that predict domestic activism by environmental groups. Indeed, ENGOs that interact more often with their national government are also more likely to be international actors. Other group characteristics that typically predict domestic patterns of action, such as budget size and group ideology, also carry over to our analyses of international activity.

In contrast, aspects of the national context that are suggested by globalization theory—involvement in the international community and the extent of democracy—have only a weak influence on the actual behavior of ENGOs.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup>As a measure of the relative weight of the global and group characteristics models, we recomputed the regression analyses of Table 4, separately using the group of variables from each model. The group characteristics' variables (table alone) are better able to explain international communication and the supply of resources; globalization variables better explain who receives resources:

	Communicate	Recipient	Supplier
Globalization model R	.27	.49	.37
Group characteristics R	.45	.24	.47

In other words, the level of international action supports the globalization thesis, as does the importance of issue focus. At the same time, the other correlates of action portray a considerably more complicated picture about the structure of ENGOS' transnational actions.

Moreover, the globalization theory does not give sufficient consideration to the inequalities of action that exist with the international environmental network and the implications of these inequalities. As others have observed, there is a substantial North/South transfer within the environmental community. Green NGOs in more affluent nations are more likely to supply resources—funding and information—to ENGOS in less affluent nations. Our study illustrates the extent of this pattern, and it is presumably even greater if private foundations, governmental aid, and other support from the OECD nations are calculated into the equation. The financial and information resources of environmental groups in the developing world often come from transfers from the North.

This network of information and resource sharing is an important step in the evolution of the environmental movement. Especially in the developing world, the aid provided by ENGOS, foundations, and government agencies in the developed nations is necessary to address even partially the economic and political hurdles that these groups face. Even aid from OECD environmental groups may be insufficient to enable indigenous environmental groups to protect tropical rainforests in Latin America and Southeast Asia, for example, but without aid from the North these would be hopeless causes.

However, these patterns of international action among environmental groups appear to follow many of the same asymmetries that are generally present in the international system. This is not a network of equals, with identical norms and goals as is often implied by the global civil society literature. The resource flows follow the same North/South patterns of many other first world-third world interactions. Moreover, the resource suppliers (Western ENGOS) often have distinct ideological and political goals that are not always shared by green NGOs in the developing world. Environmental groups from OECD nations are more likely than groups from developing nations to espouse a challenging ecologist orientation. Other data from this study show that ENGOS from the North place a lower priority on basic environmental quality issues, such as air and water quality, that are pressing concerns in many developing nations. ENGOS in developing nations also may be more tolerant of economic development projects that Northern ENGOS oppose because the Southern groups see these projects as providing resources to improve the quality of life in their nations. Recognizing these asymmetries, Gardner (1995) observed that as Northern ENGOS provide aid to groups in the South, they may frame environmental campaigns in ways that address their goals rather than the goals of the indigenous groups. Van der Heijden (1999, 210) similarly explained how Indian environmentalists often

question the values and goals of Western environmentalists. Thus, these conflicting ideologies and goals can create political tensions within the environmental network and affect the patterns of international cooperation (Keck and Sikkink 1998).

The different orientations of Northern resource suppliers also may weaken the legitimacy of NGOs in the developing world that become too closely tied to the perceived interests of their Northern allies. For example, NGOs that are heavily dependent on resources from OECD nations are sometimes perceived as suspect by other environmental groups and by other political actors in the nation. Gardner (1995, 225) notes, "in the worst case, aid from foreign NGOs may turn into a debilitating dependence" that pulls NGOs away from their domestic bases of support. Thus, Tarrow's (1998) skepticism of the efficacy of international networks may be justified if international dependence dilutes the domestic impact of green NGOs.

More generally, our findings have implications that reach beyond environmental organizations. We believe that the extent to which environmental groups interact across nations (and the determinants of action) provides a glimpse into the near future about how certain public interest groups—such as women's groups and human rights groups—may organize to influence governmental policies. Environmental groups are probably at the forefront of such developments because they are not entrenched into the national web of power relations, and many issues, such as global warming and wildlife preservation, encourage international policy action. In short, NGOs have an incentive to look for allies elsewhere and build a transnational network if it is feasible. International coordination and comparable internationalizing strategies provide a way for NGOs to influence national policies and influence the formation of international policy regimes. Given the mixed support we found for the globalization model of transnational environmental action, it is unlikely that these other civil society movements will follow the ideal-typical path outlined by the global civil society thesis. Women's groups, ethnic movements, and other social movements may be even more dependent on group characteristics and the national context for determining their patterns of action, a point that future research should address.

Certainly international cooperation among environmental groups benefits the movement, especially in the developing world where resources and expertise are limited. The cumulative impact of resource and information sharing within these networks may help both with the specific policy challenges being faced by developed nations and the broader challenges of developing democratic cultures and political practices. But one cannot assume that there will be a simple diffusion of the goals and political norms of Western NGOs to groups in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and other areas of the world. How these networks balance these forces will ultimately define their impact on the respective nation-states and on global political change.

### Appendix: National Groups Included in the Global Environmental Organization Survey

<b>North America</b>		<b>Asia</b>	
United States	20	China	2
Canada	1	India	4
		Korea	2
		Turkey	3
<b>Western Europe</b>		<b>Latin America</b>	
Austria	6	Argentina	8
Belgium	6	Belize	1
Britain	18	Bolivia	2
Denmark	3	Brazil	7
Finland	2	Chile	1
France	6	Colombia	4
Germany	5	Costa Rica	3
Greece	4	Ecuador	12
Iceland	1	El Salvador	1
Ireland	2	Guatemala	5
Italy	7	Honduras	3
Luxembourg	3	Mexico	11
Netherlands	9	Nicaragua	1
Norway	4	Panama	2
Portugal	5	Paraguay	1
Spain	3	Peru	2
Sweden	6	Venezuela	3
Switzerland	6		
<b>Eastern Europe</b>		<b>Pacific Rim</b>	
Bulgaria	3	Australia	12
Czech Rep	3	Japan	11
Estonia	2	New Zealand	3
Hungary	4		
Latvia	2	<b>Other</b>	
Lithuania	1	South Africa	2
Poland	3		
Romania	2		
Russia	2		
Slovakia	2		
Slovenia	1		

*Manuscript submitted 23 October 2000*

*Final manuscript received 18 September 2001*



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