Politics Beyond the State: Environmental Activism and World Civic Politics

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INTEREST in transnational activist groups such as Greenpeace, European Nuclear Disarmament (END), and Amnesty International has been surging. Much of this new attention on the part of students of international relations is directed at showing that transnational activists make a difference in world affairs, that they shape conditions which influence how their particular cause is addressed. Recent scholarship demonstrates, for example, that Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have changed state human rights practices in particular countries.¹ Other studies have shown that environmental groups have influenced negotiations over environmental protection of the oceans, the ozone layer, and Antarctica and that they have helped enforce national compliance with international mandates.² Still others have shown that peace groups helped shape nuclear policy regarding deployments in Europe during the cold war and influenced Soviet perceptions in a way that allowed for eventual superpower accommo-


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This work is important, especially insofar as it establishes the increasing influence of transnational nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) on states. Nonetheless, for all its insight, it misses a different but related dimension of activist work—the attempt by activists to shape public affairs by working within and across societies themselves.

Recent studies neglect the societal dimension of activists’ efforts in part because they subscribe to a narrow understanding of politics. They see politics as a practice associated solely with government and thus understand activist efforts exclusively in terms of their influence upon government. Seen from this perspective, transnational activists are solely global pressure groups seeking to change states’ policies or create conditions in the international system that enhance or diminish interstate cooperation. Other efforts directed toward societies at large are ignored or devalued because they are not considered to be genuinely political in character.

Such a narrow view of politics in turn limits research because it suggests that the conception and meaning of transnational activist groups is fixed and that scholarship therefore need only measure activist influence on states. This article asserts, by contrast, that the meaning of activist groups in a global context is not settled and will remain problematic as long as the strictly societal dimension of their work is left out of the analysis. Activist efforts within and across societies are a proper object of study and only by including them in transnational activist research can one render an accurate understanding of transnational activist groups and, by extension, of world politics.

This article focuses on activist society-oriented activities and demonstrates that activist organizations are not simply transnational pressure groups, but rather are political actors in their own right. The main argument is that the best way to think about transnational activist societal efforts is through the concept of “world civic politics.” When activists work to change conditions without directly pressuring states, their activities take place in the civil dimension of world collective life or what is sometimes called global civil society. Civil society is that arena of social engagement which exists above the individual yet

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below the state.\(^5\) It is a complex network of economic, social, and cultural practices based on friendship, family, the market, and voluntary affiliation.\(^6\) Although the concept arose in the analysis of domestic societies, it is beginning to make sense on a global level. The interpenetration of markets, the intermeshing of symbolic meaning systems, and the proliferation of transnational collective endeavors signal the formation of a thin, but nevertheless present, public sphere where private individuals and groups interact for common purposes. Global civil society as such is that slice of associational life which exists above the individual and below the state, but also across national boundaries. When transnational activists direct their efforts beyond the state, they are politicizing global civil society.

Like its domestic counterpart, global civil society consists of structures that define and shape public affairs. For example, market forces shape the way vast numbers of people in various countries act with reference to issues of public concern. Additionally, voluntary associations affiliated with trade, cultural expression, religion, science, and production have widespread influence. In targeting these processes and institutions, activists use the realms of transnational social, cultural, and economic life to influence world public affairs.

One can appreciate the idea of world civic politics by drawing an analogy between activist efforts at the domestic and international levels. According to Melucci, Habermas, Offe, and others, the host of contemporary domestic peace, human rights, women's, and human potential movements in the developed world both lobby their respective governments and work through their societies to effect change. In this latter regard, movements identify and manipulate nonstate levers of power, institutions, and modes of action to alter the dynamics of domestic collective life.\(^7\) The French antinuclear movement, the German


\(^6\) I follow a Hegelian understanding of civil society, which includes the economy within its domain. Later formulations, most notably those offered by Gramsci and Parsons, introduce a three-part model that differentiates civil society from both the state and the economy. See Talcott Parsons, *The System of Modern Societies* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971); Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971). For an extensive argument to exclude the economy from civil society, see Cohen and Arato (fn. 5).

Green Party in its early years, and the feminist movement in the United Kingdom represent significant attempts to politicize various arenas and thereby bring about change. Likewise, present-day grassroots organizations—from new populism in the United States to Christian-based communities in Latin America and alternative development organizations in India—are both targeting their governments and nurturing modes of political expression outside state control. Finally, the early years of Solidarity in Poland and Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia illustrate the multifaceted character of activist politics. Recognizing the limits of influencing their respective states, Solidarity and Charter 77 created and utilized horizontal societal associations involving churches, savings associations, literary ventures, and so forth to bring about widespread change. As with the other organizations, this does not mean that they ignored the state but rather that they made a strategic decision to explore the political potential of unofficial realms of collective action. In each instance groups target government officials when it seems likely to be efficacious. If this approach fails or proves too dangerous, however, they seek other means of affecting widespread conditions and practices. Analytically, these other means are found in civil society.

Moved up a political notch, this form of politics helps explain the efforts of transnational activist groups. Amnesty International, Friends of the Earth, Oxfam, and Greenpeace target governments and try to change state behavior to further their aims. When this route fails or


11 The danger of engaging the state in places like Poland provided the impetus to create horizontal associations. This was the central idea behind the Polish “self-limiting revolution,” which recognized the power of the state with its Soviet support and hence the improbability of toppling it. See Michnik (fn. 10).
proves less efficacious, they work through transnational economic, social, and cultural networks to achieve their ends. The emphasis on world civic politics stresses that while these latter efforts may not translate easily into state action, they should not be viewed as simply matters of cultural or social interest. Rather, they involve identifying and manipulating instruments of power for shaping collective life. Unfortunately, the conventional wisdom has taken them to be politically irrelevant.

In the following I analyze the character of world civic politics by focusing on one relatively new sector of this activity, transnational environmental activist groups (TEAGs). As environmental dangers have become part of the public consciousness and a matter of scholarly concern in recent years, much attention has been directed toward the transboundary and global dimensions of environmental degradation. Ozone depletion, global warming, and species extinction, for instance, have consequences that cross state boundaries and in the extreme threaten to change the organic infrastructure of life on earth. Responding in part to increased knowledge about these problems, transnational activist groups have emerged whose members are dedicated to "saving the planet." World Wildlife Fund, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, Conservation International, and Earth Island Institute are voluntary associations organized across state boundaries that work toward environmental protection at the global level. TEAGs have grown tremendously since the 1970s, with the budgets of the largest organizations greater than the amount spent by most countries on environmental issues and equal to, if not double, the annual expenditure of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). Furthermore, membership in these groups has grown throughout the 1980s and 1990s to a point where millions of people are currently members of TEAGs.

This article demonstrates that, while TEAGs direct much effort toward state policies, their political activity does not stop there but extends into global civil society. In the following, I describe and analyze this type of activity and, in doing so, make explicit the dynamics and significance of world civic politics.

This article is divided into five sections. The first places my argument within the theoretical literature of international relations to highlight where my thesis is similar to and yet different from earlier efforts to underscore the role of nongovernmental organizations. The

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12 In 1992 the budgets of Greenpeace International and World Wildlife Fund were roughly $100 million and $200 million, respectively. UNEP's budget was roughly $75 million.

13 In 1994 both Greenpeace and World Wildlife Fund each had over six million members.
second is an empirical presentation of the way TEAGs specifically practice world civic politics. It describes how they foster an ecological sensibility and explicates the significance of this form of politics. The third section outlines how environmental groups pressure corporations and explores the political dimension of this strategy. The fourth section describes how TEAGs empower local communities and considers the ramifications for world politics. In each of these instances activists operate outside the province of state-to-state interaction yet engage in genuine political activity. The final section evaluates the concept of world civic politics from a theoretical perspective.

Two caveats are in order before proceeding. First, although I refer to transnational environmental activist groups in general, the focus here is on so-called northern organizations. These are groups that originated in advanced industrial societies and, although they have offices throughout both the developed and the developing worlds, maintain their central headquarters in the North. An implicit assumption is that an understanding of northern organizations will shed light upon transnational activist groups in general; this premise, however, may turn out to be false. Second, I do not mean to suggest that transnational environmental organizations have a monopoly on ecological wisdom, are the harbingers of an ecologically sound future, or are beyond criticism. Like all other political actors, activists have their own problems. One must question, for example, their use and at times misuse of scientific evidence; their accountability (they are not elected officials); and the complex and often antagonistic relations among different transnational groups. I do not address these aspects of activist groups in detail here, although in a number of places I refer to particular instances when they become relevant. This is not to overlook the problems associated with transnational activist groups so much as to maintain a focus on the type of politics they employ to further their goals. In other words, one need not necessarily support the work of transnational environmental groups to understand how they operate in the international arena.

**BEYOND THE TRANSNATIONALIST DEBATE**

Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s NGOs were the objects of tremendous scholarly attention. At the time the statecentric model of

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14 For a comprehensive study of environmental NGOs in the developing world, with important references to transnational ones, see Julie Fisher, *The Road from Rio: Sustainable Development and the Nongovernmental Movement in the Third World* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1993).
world politics was undergoing one of its many attacks and NGOs were enlisted in the assault. Many scholars argued that since nonstate actors were growing in number and power, students of world politics would be better served by paying attention to these as well as, if not instead of, nation-states. For example, a substantial number of multinational corporations (MNCs) had assets in excess of the gross national product (GNP) of certain states and had projects in numerous countries, leading many scholars to argue that MNCs were curtailing state action and represented an independent variable for explaining world events. Likewise, advances in communications technology opened the way for nonstate actors such as revolutionary groups, the Catholic church, and political parties to play a greater role in world politics. Innovations in overseas travel, international wire services, computer networks, and telecommunications were enabling these actors to influence the ideas, values, and political persuasions of people around the globe. Scholars argued that they were having a significant impact on questions of peace, international morality, and the salience of political issues. In short, the surge in transnational activity suggested that the state might not be the most important variable for explaining world events.

The debate over the relative importance of the state in world affairs had an impact in the field insofar as it convinced realists—those who most explicitly privileged the state in the 1960s and 1970s—that NGOs matter. To be sure, this took some effort. Defenders of the strictly statecentric model argued, for example, that the proliferation of NGOs

15 In 1967, for example, General Motors had production facilities in 24 countries and total sales of $20 billion. This total was greater than the GNP of all but 14 of the 124 members of the UN at the time. Also in 1967 Standard Oil of New Jersey had facilities in 45 countries and total sales of $13.3 billion. See Gerald Sumida, “Transnational Movements and Economic Structures,” in Cyril Black and Richard Falk, eds., The Future of the International Legal Order (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 4:553.


18 For discussions of the world political system with special emphasis on transnational activity, see Johan Galtung, The True Worlds: A Transnational Perspective (New York: Free Press, 1980).

was a function of hegemonic stability and thus derivative of interstate behavior.20 Others challenged the contention that transnationalism was increasing interdependence between states and hence restricting states’ ability to control events, and argued instead that the amount of interdependence had actually been on the decrease.21 Furthermore, many claimed that despite the rise in the number of nonstate actors, NGOs were not a factor in the most consequential world events at the time and that, indeed, compared with nation-states, nonstate actors were of only marginal political importance.22 Notwithstanding these arguments, by the 1980s NGOs had made their presence felt and scholars began to take them seriously as a legitimate object of study.

The debate about NGOs, while important, suffered premature closure, because scholars ultimately saw NGO significance in terms of state power. That is, NGOs assumed prominence in subsequent studies only to the extent that they affected state policies; their influence on world affairs apart from this role was neglected.23 One of the reasons for this is that the debate itself was framed in a way that could have had only this result. Scholars saw the controversy as a “unit of analysis” problem. They argued over which variable was the proper object of research in world politics. In order to understand world affairs, should one study, for instance, MNCs, the state, revolutionary groups, or transnational political parties? With the problem formulated in this way, transnationalists were associated with a “sovereignty at bay” model of world politics, which claimed that NGOs were eclipsing states as the key independent actors in world affairs.24 Unfortunately, this set up the debate as an either/or proposition: either the state was the primary mover and shaker of world affairs or it was not. As a result, critics had only to demonstrate the superior causal agency of the state to dismiss or greatly deflate the transnationalist challenge—which is exactly what occurred.25

24 The term “sovereignty at bay” comes from the title of the 1971 book by Raymond Vernon (New York: Basic Books). It is important to note that Vernon was not a proponent of the transnationalist challenge, even though the title of his book provided a catchphrase to encapsulate the host of arguments advanced by its proponents. See Raymond Vernon, “Sovereignty at Bay: Ten Years After,” International Organization 35 (Summer 1981).
25 In the words of John Ruggie, it could be said that the debate died down because scholars studied NGOs with an eye toward “institutional substitutability.” If NGOs cannot substitute for the state as an
More recently, a resurgence of interest in NGOs has led to efforts to conceptualize them outside the unit-of-analysis problem. Most of this work is part of a broader set of concerns loosely associated with the so-called third debate, the argument over the proper paradigm for studying international relations. The origins of the third debate lie in the questioning of the statecentric model of the 1970s and 1980s, but it has since expanded to include epistemological, ontological, and axiological concerns. Interest in NGOs has emerged under the rubric of the third debate insofar as scholars have advanced a number of propositions regarding how, why, and to what extent NGOs matter in world affairs based on sophisticated understandings of power, knowledge, and agency. Notable here is Rosenau's notion of sovereignty-free actors and the influence of microprocesses on macrophenomena, Walker's insights concerning the critical component of social movements, and Falk's understanding of the antistatist logic of activist groups. My work takes these propositions as a point of departure but seeks to situate them within a broader frame of reference. In my view the analytic significance of these and similar efforts can be advanced by encompassing them within a larger investigation into the nature of world politics.

Throughout the earlier transnationalist debate, scholars never questioned the essential quality of world political activity. Having lost part of the argument, after being forced to acknowledge the centrality of the state, they failed to ask what constitutes relevant political behavior, what power is, and which dimensions of collective life are most significant for bringing about changes in human practices. Students of international relations fell back on the traditional notion that genuine political activity is the interaction of nation-states, that power consists in the means available to states, and that the state system is the arena for affecting human behavior throughout the world. Thus, NGOs became important, but only because they influenced state behavior. They

inhistorical entity, they become politically irrelevant. Ruggie argues that such a mind-set bleaches out much of the phenomena responsible for long-term political change. See John Gerard Ruggie, "Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations," International Organization 47 (Winter 1993), 143.


28 R. B. J. Walker, One World/Many Worlds (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1988).

29 Falk (fn. 4).
did not affect world affairs in their own right.\textsuperscript{30} Current research can fall into this same trap if not understood to be part of a more fundamental type of examination.\textsuperscript{31}

This article studies NGOs with a particular focus on the meaning of world politics. It eschews an understanding in which the multifarious activities of actors gain relevance only insofar as they affect states, and concentrates instead on identifying NGO activity that orders, directs, and manages widespread behavior throughout the world. One can get a sense of this through a study of transnational environmental activist groups. In doing so, however, one must focus on the political action per se of these organizations and trace its world significance and interpret its meaning independent of the argument about relative causal weight. That is, one must be more interested in understanding the nature of certain types of political action than in ranking different agents that engage in politics. By doing so, scholars will be able to recognize that NGOs are significant in world affairs not only because they influence states but also because they affect the behavior of larger collectivities throughout the world. They do so by manipulating governing structures of global civil society.

\textbf{DISSEMINATING AN ECOLOGICAL SENSIBILITY}

Few images capture the environmental age as well as the sight of Greenpeace activists positioning themselves between harpoons and whales in an effort to stop the slaughter of endangered sea mammals. Since 1972, with the formal organization of Greenpeace into a transnational environmental activist group, Greenpeace has emblazoned a host of such images onto the minds of people around the world. Greenpeace activists have climbed aboard whaling ships, parachuted from the top of smokestacks, plugged up industrial discharge pipes, and floated a hot air balloon into a nuclear test site. These direct actions are media stunts, exciting images orchestrated to convey a critical perspective toward environmental issues. Numerous other organizations, including the Sea Shepherds Conservation Society, Earth-First! and Rainforest Action Network, engage in similar efforts. The dramatic aspect attracts journalists and television crews to specific ac-

\textsuperscript{30} The very term "nongovernmental organization" betrays a statecentric understanding of politics.

\textsuperscript{31} This is not to imply that studies of the influence of NGOs on states are unnecessary. There is still much to understand regarding the extent to which NGOs influence governments and the quality of their lobbying efforts. A focus on world civic politics, then, is not meant to supplant a statecentric notion of international politics so much as to augment it.
tions and makes it possible for the groups themselves to distribute their own media presentations. Greenpeace, for example, has its own media facilities; within hours it can provide photographs to newspapers and circulate scripted video news spots to television stations in eighty-eight countries. The overall intent is to use international mass communications to expose antiecolological practices and thereby inspire audiences to change their views and behavior vis-à-vis the environment.

Direct action is based on two strategies. The first is simply to bring what are often hidden instances of environmental abuse to the attention of a wide audience: harpooners kill whales on the high seas; researchers abuse Antarctica; significant species extinction takes place in the heart of the rain forest; and nuclear weapons are tested in the most deserted areas of the planet. Through television, radio, newspapers, and magazines transnational activist groups bring these hidden spots of the globe into people's everyday lives, thus enabling vast numbers of people to "bear witness" to environmental abuse. Second, TEAGs engage in dangerous and dramatic actions that underline how serious they consider certain environmental threats to be. That activists take personal risks to draw attention to environmental issues highlights their indignation and the degree of their commitment to protecting the planet. Taken together, these two strategies aim to change the way vast numbers of people see the world—by dislodging traditional understandings of environmental degradation and substituting new interpretive frames. This was put particularly well by Robert Hunter, a founding member of Greenpeace, who participated in the group's early antiwhaling expeditions. For Hunter, the purpose of the effort was to overturn fundamental images about whaling: where the predominant view was of brave men battling vicious and numerous monsters of the deep, Greenpeace documented something different. As Hunter put it:


34 Bearing witness is a type of political action that originated with the Quakers. It requires that one who has observed a morally objectionable act (in this case an ecologically destructive one) must either take action to prevent further injustice or stand by and attest to its occurrence; one may not turn away in ignorance. For bearing witness as used by Greenpeace, see Hunter (fn. 33); Michael Brown and John May, *The Greenpeace Story* (Ontario: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1989); Greenpeace, "Fifteen Years at the Front Lines," *Greenpeace Examiner* 11 (October–December 1986).
Soon, images would be going out into hundreds of millions of minds around the world, a completely new set of basic images about whaling. Instead of small boats and giant whales, giant boats and small whales; instead of courage killing whales, courage saving whales; David had become Goliath, Goliath was now David; if the mythology of Moby Dick and Captain Ahab had dominated human consciousness about Leviathan for over a century, a whole new age was in the making.35

Raising awareness through media stunts is not primarily about changing governmental policies, although this may of course happen as state officials bear witness or are pressured by constituents to codify into law shifts in public opinion or widespread sentiment. But this is only one dimension of TEAG direct action efforts. The new age envisioned by Hunter is more than passing environmental legislation or adopting new environmental policies. Additionally, it involves convincing all actors—from governments to corporations, private organizations, and ordinary citizens—to make decisions and act in deference to environmental awareness. Smitten with such ideas, governments will, activists hope, take measures to protect the environment. When the ideas have more resonance outside government, they will shift the standards of good conduct and persuade people to act differently even though governments are not requiring them to do so. In short, TEAGs work to disseminate an ecological sensibility to shift the governing ideas that animate societies, whether institutionalized within government or not, and count on this to reverberate throughout various institutions and collectivities.

The challenge for students of international relations is to apprehend the effects of these efforts and their political significance. As already mentioned, scholars have traditionally focused on state policy and used this as the criterion for endowing NGOs with political significance. Such a focus, however, misses the broader changes initiated by NGOs beyond state behavior. To get at this dimension of change requires a more sociological orientation toward world affairs.36 One such orientation is a so-called fluid approach.

The fluid approach has been used in the study of domestic social movements but can be adopted to analyze TEAGs.37 It gauges the signif-

35 Hunter (fn. 33), 229.
36 Sociological perspectives on world politics have proliferated over the past few years. See, for example, Leslie Sklair, Sociology of the Global System (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); and David Jacobson, “The States System in the Age of Rights” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1991).
icance of activist groups by attending to cultural expressions that signal cognitive, affective, and evaluative shifts in societies. Observers are attuned to the quickening of actions and to changes in meaning and perceive that something new is happening in a wide variety of places. When analyzing the peace movement, for instance, a fluid approach recognizes that activists aim not only to convince governments to cease making war but also to create more peaceful societies. This entails propagating expressions of nonviolence, processes of conflict resolution, and, according to some, practices that are more cooperative than competitive. A fluid approach looks throughout society and interprets shifts in such expressions as a measure of the success of the peace movement.38 Similarly, a fluid approach acknowledges that feminist groups aim at more than simply enacting legislation to protect women against gender discrimination. Additionally, they work to change patriarchal practices and degrading representations of women throughout society. Thus, as Joseph Gusfield notes, the successes of the feminist movement can be seen "where the housewife finds a new label for discontents, secretaries decide not to serve coffee and husbands are warier about using past habits of dominance."39 A fluid approach, in other words, interprets activist efforts by noticing and analyzing, in the words of Herbert Blumer, a "cultural drift," "societal mood," or "public orientation" felt and expressed by people in diverse ways.40 It focuses on changes in lifestyle, art, consumer habits, fashion, and so forth and sees these, as well as shifts in laws and policies, as consequences of activist efforts.

Applied to the international arena, a fluid approach enables one to appreciate, however imperfectly, changes initiated by transnational activists that occur independently of state policies. With regard to TEAGs, it allows one to observe how an environmental sensibility infiltrates deliberations at the individual, organizational, corporate, governmental, and interstate levels to shape world collective life.

Consider the following. In 1970 one in ten Canadians said the environment was worthy of being on the national agenda; twenty years later one in three felt not only that it should be on the agenda but that it was the most pressing issue facing Canada.41 In 1981, 45 percent of

39 Gusfield (fn. 37), 326.
those polled in a U.S. survey said that protecting the environment was so important that “requirements and standards cannot be too high and continuing environmental improvements must be made regardless of cost”; in 1990, 74 percent supported the statement.\textsuperscript{42} This general trend is supported around the world. In a recent Gallup poll majorities in twenty countries gave priority to safeguarding the environment even at the cost of slowing economic growth; additionally, 71 percent of the people in sixteen countries, including India, Mexico, South Korea, and Brazil, said they were willing to pay higher prices for products if it would help to protect the environment.\textsuperscript{43}

These figures suggest a significant shift in awareness and concern about the environment over the past two decades. It is also worth noting that people have translated this sentiment into changes in behavior. In the 1960s the U.S. Navy and Air Force used whales for target practice. Twenty-five years later an international effort costing $5 million was mounted to save three whales trapped in the ice in Alaska.\textsuperscript{44} Two decades ago corporations produced products with little regard for their environmental impact. Today it is incumbent upon corporations to reduce negative environmental impact at the production, packaging, and distribution phases of industry.\textsuperscript{45} When multilateral development banks and other aid institutions were established after the Second World War, environmental impact assessments were unheard of; today they are commonplace.\textsuperscript{46} Finally, twenty years ago recycling as a concept barely existed. Today recycling is mandatory in many municipalities around the world, and in some areas voluntary recycling is a profit-making industry. (Between 1960 and 1990 the amount of municipal


solid waste recovered by recycling in the United States more than quintupled.\textsuperscript{47} In each of these instances people are voluntarily modifying their behavior in part because of the messages publicized by activists. If one looked solely at state behavior to account for this change, one would miss a tremendous amount of significant world political action.

A final, if controversial, example of the dissemination of an ecological sensibility is the now greatly reduced practice of killing harp seal pups in northern Canada. Throughout the 1960s the annual Canadian seal hunt took place without attracting much public attention or concern. In the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s and 1980s the International Fund for Animals, Greenpeace, the Sea Shepherds Conservation Society, and a host of smaller preservation groups saw this—in hindsight inaccurately, according to many—as a threat to the continued existence of harp seals in Canada. They brought the practice to the attention of the world, using, among other means, direct action. As a result, people around the globe, but especially in Europe, changed their buying habits and stopped purchasing products made out of the pelts. As a consequence, the market for such merchandise all but dried up with the price per skin plummeting.\textsuperscript{48} Then, in 1983, the European Economic Community (EEC) actually banned the importation of seal pelts.\textsuperscript{49} It is significant that the EEC did so only after consumer demand had already dropped dramatically.\textsuperscript{50} Governmental policy, that is, may have simply been an afterthought and ultimately unnecessary. People acted in response to the messages propagated by activist groups.\textsuperscript{51}

When Greenpeace and other TEAGs undertake direct action or follow other strategies to promote an ecological sensibility, these are the types of changes they are seeking. At times, governments respond with policy measures and changed behavior with respect to environmental


\textsuperscript{49} This led to a further drop in price. By 1985 the price per skin had dropped to $6.99. See fn. 48.

\textsuperscript{50} Wenzel (fn. 48), 52–53; idem, “Baby Harp Seals Spared,” \textit{Oceani} 21 (March–April 1988); see, generally, Day (fn. 33), 60–64.

\textsuperscript{51} This example also demonstrates that environmental activists are not always accurate in assessing environmental threats and guaranteeing the ecological soundness of the sensibility they wish to impart. There is no evidence that harp seals were ever an endangered species. This is particularly troubling because the activities of Greenpeace, IFAW, and others produced severe social dislocation and hardship for communities as far away as Greenland, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands, as well as in the coastal communities of Newfoundland and Baffin Island. See Oran Young, \textit{Arctic Politics: Conflict and Cooperation in the Circumpolar North} (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1992), 128; J. Allen, “Anti-Sealing as an Industry,” \textit{Journal of Political Economy} 87 (April 1979); Leslie Spence et al., “The Not So Peaceful World of Greenpeace,” \textit{Forbes}, November 11, 1991; Wenzel (fn. 46).
issues. The failure of governments to respond, however, does not necessarily mean that the efforts of activists have been in vain. Rather, they influence understandings of good conduct throughout societies at large. They help set the boundaries of what is considered acceptable behavior.52

When people change their buying habits, voluntarily recycle garbage, boycott certain products, and work to preserve species, it is not necessarily because governments are breathing down their necks. Rather, they are acting out of a belief that the environmental problems involved are severe, and they wish to contribute to alleviating them. They are being “stung,” as it were, by an ecological sensibility. This sting is a type of governance. It represents a mechanism of authority that can shape widespread human behavior.

MULTINATIONAL CORPORATE POLITICS

In 1991 the multinational McDonald’s Corporation decided to stop producing its traditional clamshell hamburger box and switch to paper packaging in an attempt to cut back on the use of disposable foam and plastic. In 1990 Uniroyal Chemical Company, the sole manufacturer of the apple-ripening agent Alar, ceased to produce and market the chemical both in the United States and abroad. Alar, the trade name for daminozide, was used on most kinds of red apples and, according to some, found to cause cancer in laboratory animals. Finally, in 1990 Starkist and Chicken of the Sea, the two largest tuna companies, announced that they would cease purchasing tuna caught by setting nets on dolphins or by any use of drift nets; a year later Bumble Bee Tuna followed suit. Such action has contributed to protecting dolphin populations around the world.

In each of these instances environmental activist groups—both domestic and transnational—played an important role in convincing corporations to alter their practices. To be sure, each case raises controversial issues concerning the ecological wisdom of activist pressures, but it also nevertheless demonstrates the effects of TEAG efforts. In the case of McDonald’s, the corporation decided to abandon its foam and plastic containers in response to prodding by a host of environmental groups. These organizations, which included the Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste, Earth Action Network, and Kids against

Pollution, organized a "send-back" campaign in which people mailed McDonald's packaging to the national headquarters. Additionally, Earth Action Network actually broke windows and scattered supplies at a McDonald's restaurant in San Francisco to protest the company's environmental policies. The Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) played a mediating role by organizing a six-month, joint task force to study ways to reduce solid waste in McDonald's eleven thousand restaurants worldwide. The task force provided McDonald's with feasible responses to activist demands. What is clear from most reports on the change is that officials at McDonalds did not believe it necessarily made ecological or economic sense to stop using clamshell packaging but that they bent to activist pressure.

Uniroyal Chemical Company ceased producing Alar after groups such as Ralph Nader's Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) organized a massive public outcry about the use of the product on apples in the U.S. and abroad. In 1989 NRDC produced a study that found that Alar created cancer risks 240 times greater than those declared safe by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This was publicized on CBS's 60 Minutes and led to critical stories in numerous newspapers and magazines. Moreover, activists pressured supermarket chains to stop selling apples grown with Alar and pressured schools to stop serving Alar-sprayed apples. The effects were dramatic. The demand for apples in general shrank significantly because of the scare, lowering prices well below the break-even level. This led to a loss of $135 million for Washington State apple growers alone. Effects such as these and continued pressure by activist groups convinced Uniroyal to cease production of the substance not only in the U.S. but overseas as well. Like McDonalds, Uniroyal changed its practices not for economic reasons nor to increase business nor because it genuinely felt Alar was harmful. Rather, it capitulated to activist pressure. In fact, there is evi-

idence from nonindustry sources suggesting that Alar did not pose the level of threat publicized by activists.58

Finally, in the case of dolphin-free tuna, Earth Island Institute (EII) and other organizations launched an international campaign in 1985 to stop all drift-net and purse seine fishing by tuna fleets. For unknown reasons, tuna in the Eastern Tropical Pacific Ocean swim under schools of dolphins. For years tuna fleets have set their nets on dolphins or entangled dolphins in drift nets as a way to catch tuna. While some fleets still use these strategies, the three largest tuna companies have ceased doing so. TEAGs were at the heart of this change. Activists waged a boycott against all canned tuna, demonstrated at stockholders’ meetings, and rallied on the docks of the Tuna Boat Association in San Diego. Furthermore, EII assisted in the production of the film Where Have All the Dolphins Gone? which was shown throughout the United States and abroad; it promoted the idea of “dolphin-safe” tuna labels to market environmentally sensitive brands; and it enlisted Heinz, the parent company of Starkist, to take an active role in stopping the slaughter of dolphins by all tuna companies. Its efforts, along with those of Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, and others, were crucial to promoting dolphin-safe tuna fishing.59 One result of these efforts is that dolphin kills associated with tuna fishing in 1993 numbered fewer than 5,000. This represents one-third the mortality rate of 1992, when 15,470 dolphins died in nets, and less than one-twentieth of the number in 1989, when over 100,000 dolphins died at the hands of tuna fleets.60 These numbers represent the effects of activist efforts. Although governments did eventually adopt domestic dolphin conservation policies and negotiated partial international standards to reduce dolphin kills, the first such actions came into force only in late 1992 with the United Nations moratorium on drift nets. Moreover, the first significant actions against purse seine fishing, which more directly affects dolphins, came in June 1994 with the United States International


Dolphin Conservation Act. As with the Canadian seal pup hunt, government action in the case of tuna fisheries largely codified changes that were already taking place.

In each instance, activist groups did not direct their efforts at governments. They did not target politicians; nor did they organize constituent pressuring. Rather, they focused on corporations themselves. Through protest, research, exposés, orchestrating public outcry, and organizing joint consultations, activists won corporate promises to bring their practices in line with environmental concerns. The levers of power in these instances were found in the economic realm of collective life rather than in the strictly governmental realm. Activists understand that the economic realm, while not the center of traditional notions of politics, nevertheless furnishes channels for effecting widespread changes in behavior; they recognize that the economic realm is a form of governance and can be manipulated to alter collective practices.

Perhaps the best example of how activist groups, especially transnational ones, enlist the economic dimensions of governance into their enterprises is the effort to establish environmental oversight of corporations. In September 1989 a coalition of environmental, investor, and church interests, known as the Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economies (CERES), met in New York City to introduce a ten-point environmental code of conduct for corporations. One month later CERES, along with the Green Alliance, launched a similar effort in the United Kingdom. The aim was to establish criteria for auditing the environmental performance of large domestic and multinational industries. The code called on companies to, among other things, minimize the release of pollutants, conserve nonrenewable resources through efficient use and planning, utilize environmentally safe and sustainable energy sources, and consider demonstrated environmental commitment as a factor in appointing members to the board of directors. Fourteen environmental organizations, including TEAGs such as Friends of the Earth and the International Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture, publicize the CERES Principles (formerly known as the Valdez Principles, inspired by the Exxon Valdez oil spill) and enlist corporations to pledge compliance. What is significant from an international perspective is that signatories include at least one Fortune 500 company and a number of multinational corporations. Sun Company, General Motors, Po-

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laroid, and a host of other MNCs have pledged compliance or are at least seriously considering doing so. Because these companies operate in numerous countries, their actions have transnational effects.

The CERES Principles are valuable for a number of reasons. In the case of pension funds, the code is being used to build shareholder pressure on companies to improve their environmental performance. Investors can use it as a guide to determine which companies practice socially responsible investment. Environmentalists use the code as a measuring device to praise or criticize corporate behavior. Finally, the Principles are used to alert college graduates on the job market about corporate compliance with the code and thus attempt to make environmental issues a factor in one's choice of a career. Taken together, these measures force some degree of corporate accountability by establishing mechanisms of governance to shape corporate behavior. To be sure, they have not turned businesses into champions of environmentalism, nor are they as effectual as mechanisms available to governments. At work, however, is activist discovery and manipulation of economic means of power.\footnote{See CERES Coalition, The 1990 Ceres Guide to the Valdez Principles (Boston: CERES, 1990); Valerie Ann-Zondorak, "A New Face in Corporate Environmental Responsibility: The Valdez Principles," \textit{Boston College Environmental Affairs Law Review} 18 (Spring 1991); Jack Doyle, "Valdez Principles: Corporate Code of Conduct," \textit{Social Policy} 20 (Winter 1990); Joan Bavaria, "Dispatches from the Front Lines of Corporate Social Responsibility," \textit{Business and Society Review}, no. 81 (Spring 1992).}

Via the CERES Principles and other forms of pressure, activists thus influence corporate behavior.\footnote{For an extended discussion of NGO corporate politics that provides additional examples, see Starke (fn. 41), 89ff.} McDonald's, Uniroyal, and others have not been changing their behavior because governments are breathing down their necks. Rather, they are voluntarily adopting different ways of producing and distributing products. This is not to say that their actions are more environmentally sound than before they responded to activists or that their attempt to minimize environmental dangers is sincerely motivated. As mentioned, environmental activist groups do not have a monopoly on ecological wisdom, nor is corporate "greening" necessarily well intentioned.\footnote{See, for example, Jack Doyle, "Hold the Applause: A Case Study of Corporate Environmentalism," \textit{Ecologist} 22 (May–June 1992); David Beers and Catherine Capellaro, "Greenwash!" \textit{Mother Jones} (March–April 1991). For sympathetic views, see Stephan Schmidheiny, \textit{Changing Course: A Global Business Perspective on Development and the Environment} (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992); Smart (fn. 45).} Nonetheless, the multinational corporate politics of transnational groups are having an effect on the way industries do business. And to the degree that these enterprises are involved in issues of widespread public concern that cross state boundaries, activist pressure must be understood as a form of world politics.
EMPOWERING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

For decades TEAGs have worked to conserve wildlife in the developing world. Typically, this has involved people in the First World working in the Third World to restore and guard the environment. First World TEAGs—ones headquartered in the North—believed that Third World people could not appreciate the value of wildlife or were simply too strapped by economic pressures to conserve nature. Consequently, environmental organizations developed, financed, and operated programs in the field with little local participation or input.

While such efforts saved a number of species from extinction and set in motion greater concern for Third World environmental protection, on the whole they were unsuccessful at actually preserving species and their habitats from degradation and destruction. A key reason for this was that they attended more to the needs of plants and especially animals than to those of the nearby human communities. Many of the earth's most diverse and biologically rich areas are found in parts of the world where the poorest peoples draw their livelihood from the land. As demographic and economic constraints grow tighter, these people exploit otherwise renewable resources in an attempt merely to survive. Ecological sustainability in these regions, then, must involve improving the quality of life of the rural poor through projects that integrate the management of natural resources with grassroots economic development.

Often after having supported numerous failed projects, a number of TEAGs have come to subscribe to this understanding and undertake appropriate actions. World Wildlife Fund (WWF) or World Wide Fund for Nature, as it is known outside English-speaking countries, is an example of such an organization. WWF is a conservation group dedicated to protecting endangered wildlife and wildlands worldwide. It originated in 1961 as a small organization in Switzerland, making grants to finance conservation efforts in various countries. Over the past thirty years it has grown into a full-scale global environmental organization with offices in over twenty countries. Within the past decade, WWF has established a wildlands and human needs program, a


66 The relationship between the world's poor and environmental destruction is a complicated one. See, for example, Robin Broad, "The Poor and the Environment: Friends or Foes?" World Development 22 (June 1994); and Robert W. Kates and Viola Haarmann, "Where the Poor Live: Are the Assumptions Correct?" Environment 34 (May 1992).
method of conservation to be applied to all WWF projects linking human economic well-being with environmental protection. It structures a game management system in Zambia, for example, which involves local residents in antipoaching and conservation efforts, and the channeling of revenues from tourism and safaris back into the neighboring communities that surround the preserves. It informs a WWF-initiated Kilum Mountain project in the Cameroon that is developing nurseries for reforestation, reintroducing indigenous crops, and disseminating information about the long-term effects of environmentally harmful practices. Finally, it is operative in a project in St. Lucia, where WWF has lent technical assistance to set up sanitary communal waste disposal sites, improved marketing of fish to reduce overfishing, and protected mangroves from being used for fuel by planting fast-growing fuel-wood trees. WWF is not alone in these efforts. The New Forests Project, the Association for Research and Environmental Aid (AREA), the Ladakh Project, and others undertake similar actions.

In these kinds of efforts, TEAGs are not trying to galvanize public pressure aimed at changing governmental policy or directly lobbying state officials; indeed, their activity takes place far from the halls of congresses, parliaments, and executive offices. Rather, TEAGs work with ordinary people in diverse regions of the world to try to enhance local capability to carry out sustainable development projects. The guiding logic is that local people must be enlisted in protecting their own environments and that their efforts will then reverberate through wider circles of social interaction to affect broader aspects of world environmental affairs.


Independent of the content of specific projects, the efforts of TEAGs almost always bring local people together. They organize people into new forms of social interaction, and this makes for a more tightly woven web of associational life. To the degree that this is attentive to ecological issues, it partially fashions communities into ecologically sensitive social agents. This enables them more effectively to resist outside forces that press them to exploit their environments, and it helps them assume a more powerful role in determining affairs when interacting with outside institutions and processes. To paraphrase Michael Bratton, hands-on eco-development projects stimulate and release popular energies in support of community goals. This strengthens a community's ability to determine its own affairs and influence events outside its immediate domain.

The dynamics of environmental destruction often do not originate at the local or state level. Poor people who wreck their environments are generally driven to do so by multiple external pressures. Embedded within regional, national, and ultimately global markets, living under political regimes riven by rivalries and controlled by leadership that is not popularly based, penetrated by MNCs, and often at the mercy of multilateral development banks, local people respond to the consumptive practices and development strategies of those living in distant cities or countries. Once empowered, however, communities can respond to these pressures more successfully. For example, since 1985 tens of thousands of peasants, landless laborers, and tribal people have demonstrated against a series of dams in the Narmada Valley that critics believe will cause severe environmental and social damage. The Sardar Sarovar projects are intended to produce hydroelectric energy for the states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra and have been supported by the governments of these states, the Indian government, and until recently the World Bank. Resistance started locally, but since 1985 it has spread with the formation by local and transnational groups of an activist network that operates both inside India and

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71 Outside contact may also splinter traditional associations causing economic and social dislocation. See, for example, James Mittelman, Out from Underdevelopment: Prospects for the Third World (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 43–44.


abroad to thwart the project. While the final outcome has yet to be determined, local communities have already redefined the debate about the environmental efficacy of large dam projects, as well as those having to do with displacement and rehabilitation. As a result, the Indian government, the World Bank, and other aid agencies now find themselves profoundly hesitant about future dam projects; indeed, in 1993 the Indian government withdrew its request for World Bank funding to support the Sardar Sarovar project.74 Finally, local communities have served notice, through their insistence that they will drown before they let themselves be displaced, that they are better organized to resist other large-scale, external environmental and developmental designs.75

Local empowerment affects wider arenas of social life in a positive, less reactive fashion when communities reach out to actors in other regions, countries, and continents. Indeed, the solidification of connections between TEAGs and local communities itself elicits responses from regional, national, and international institutions and actors. This connection is initially facilitated when TEAGs that have offices in the developed world transfer money and resources to Third World communities. In 1989, for example, northern NGOs distributed $6.4 billion to developing countries, which is roughly 12 percent of all public and private development aid.76 Much of this aid went to local NGOs and helped to empower local communities.77

This pattern is part of a broader shift in funding from First World governments. As local NGOs become better able to chart the economic and environmental destinies of local communities, First World donors look to them for expertise and capability. For instance, in 1975 donor governments channeled $100 million through local NGOs; in 1985 the figure had risen to $1.1 billion.78 This represents a shift on the part of

77 Such funding was evident in the preparatory meetings organized for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). Organizations such as WWF spent thousands of dollars to bring Third World NGOs to Geneva, New York, and eventually to Brazil to attend the proceedings.
78 Michael Cernea, "Nongovernmental Organizations and Local Development," Regional Development Dialogue 10 (Summer 1989), 117. One should note that although the overall trend is to fund local NGOs, the amount of money going to local NGOs decreased in 1987. It increased the following year, however.
Official Development Assistance (ODA) countries. In 1975 they donated only 0.7 percent of their funding through Third World NGOs; in 1985 the figure rose to 3.6 percent.\textsuperscript{79} This pattern is further accentuated when First World governments turn to transnational NGOs in the North for similar expertise. According to a 1989 OECD report, by the early 1980s virtually all First World countries adopted a system of co-financing projects implemented by their national NGOs. "Official contributions to NGOs' activities over the decades have been on an upward trend, amounting to $2.2 billion in 1987 and representing 5 percent of total ODA," according to the report.\textsuperscript{80} While much of this was funneled through voluntary relief organizations such as Catholic Relief Services, overall there has been an upgrading in the status of NGOs concerned with development and environmental issues.\textsuperscript{81}

Increased aid to local NGOs has obvious effects on local capability. It enhances the ability of communities to take a more active and effectual role in their economic and environmental destinies. The effects are not limited, however, to a more robust civil society. Many of the activities and certainly the funding directly challenge or at least intersect with state policies; thus, governments are concerned about who controls any foreign resources that come into the country. When funds go to NGOs, state activity can be frustrated. This is most clear in places like Kenya and Malaysia, where environmental NGOs are part of broader opposition groups. In these instances outside aid to local groups may be perceived as foreign intervention trying to diminish state power. At a lesser degree of challenge, outside support may simply minimize the control government exercises over its territory. Empowering local communities diminishes state authority by reinforcing local loyalties at the expense of national identity. At a minimum, this threatens government attempts at nation building. Put most broadly, TEAGs pose a challenge to state sovereignty and more generally redefine the realm of the state itself. Thus, while TEAGs may see themselves working outside the domain of the state and focusing on civil society per se, their actions in fact have a broader impact and interfere with state politics.

Nevertheless, it would be misleading to think about TEAGs as tradi-

\textsuperscript{79} Cernea (fn. 78), 118, table 1. One should note that the reason for this shift in funding is a combination of the perceived failure of governments to promote development, the proved effectiveness of NGO responses to recent famines throughout Africa, and donor's preference for private sector development. See Anne Drabek, "Editor's Preface," \textit{World Development} 15, supplement (Autumn 1987).


\textsuperscript{81} See Fisher (fn. 14).
tional interest groups. Rather, with their hands-on development/environmental efforts TEAGs attempt to work independent of governmental activity at the level of communities themselves. That their activities end up involving them in the political universe of the state is indicative of the porous boundary between local communities and the state or, more broadly, between the state and civil society. It does not mean that activist efforts in civil society gain political relevance only when they intersect state activities.\(^2\)

The grassroots efforts of transnational environmental activists aim to engage people at the level at which they feel the most immediate effects—their own local environmental and economic conditions. At this level, TEAGs try to use activism itself, rooted in the actual experience of ordinary people, as a form of governance. It can alter the way people interact with each other and their environment, literally to change the way they live their lives. To the degree that such efforts have ramifications for wider arenas of social interaction—including states and other actors—they have world political significance.

**WORLD CIVIC POLITICS**

The predominant way to think about NGOs in world affairs is as transnational interest groups. They are politically relevant insofar as they affect state policies and interstate behavior. In this article I have argued that TEAGs, a particular type of NGO, have political relevance beyond this. They work to shape the way vast numbers of people throughout the world act toward the environment using modes of governance that are part of global civil society.

Greenpeace, Sea Shepherds Conservation Society, and EarthFirst!, for example, work to disseminate an ecological sensibility. It is a sensibility not restricted to governments nor exclusively within their domain of control. Rather, it circulates throughout all areas of collective life. To the degree this sensibility sways people, it acts as a form of governance. It defines the boundaries of good conduct and thus animates how a host of actors—from governments to voluntary associations and ordinary citizens—think about and act in reference to the environment.

A similar dynamic is at work when TEAGs pressure multinational corporations. These business enterprises interact with states, to be sure, and state governments can restrict their activities to a significant

degree. They are not monopolized by states, however, and thus their realm of operation is considerably beyond state control. Due to the reach of multinational corporations into environmental processes, encouraging them to become “green” is another instance of using the governing capacities outside formal government to shape widespread activities.

Finally, when TEAGs empower local communities, they are likewise not focused primarily on states. Rather, by working to improve people’s day-to-day economic lives in ecologically sustainable ways, they bypass state apparatuses and activate governance that operates at the community level. As numerous communities procure sustainable development practices, the efforts of TEAGs take effect. Moreover, as changed practices at this level translate up through processes and mechanisms that are regional, national, and global in scope, the efforts by TEAGs influence the activities of larger collectivities, which in turn shape the character of public life.

I suggested that the best way to think about these activities is through the category of “world civic politics.” When TEAGs work through transnational networks associated with cultural, social, and economic life, they are enlisting forms of governance that are civil as opposed to official or state constituted in character. Civil, in this regard, refers to the quality of interaction that takes place above the individual and below the state yet across national boundaries. The concept of world civic politics clarifies how the forms of governance in global civil society are distinct from the instrumentalities of state rule.

At the most foundational level, states govern through legal means that are supported by the threat or use of force. To be sure, all states enjoy a minimum of loyalty from their citizens and administer through a variety of nonlegal and noncoercive means. Ultimately, however, the authority to govern per se rests on the claim to a monopoly over legitimate coercive power. By contrast, civic power has no legally sanctioned status and cannot be enforced through the legitimate use of violence. It rests on persuasion and more constitutive employment of power in which people change their practices because they have come to understand the world in a way that promotes certain actions over others or because they operate in an environment that induces them to do so. Put differently, civic power is the forging of voluntary and customary practices into mechanisms that govern public affairs. When TEAGs disseminate an ecological sensibility, pressure corporations, or empower local communities, they are exercising civic power across national boundaries. They are turning formerly nonpolitical practices
into instruments of governance; they are, that is, politicizing global civil society.

The distinction between state and civic power rests on the more fundamental differentiation between the state and civil society as spheres of collective life. According to Hegel, the thinker most associated with contrasting the two, civil society is a sphere or "moment" of political order in which individuals engage in free association. Although it is an arena of particular needs, private interests, and divisiveness, it is also one in which citizens can come together to realize joint aims.\(^{85}\) As it is more generally understood, civil society is the arena beyond the individual.\(^{84}\) It is there that people engage in spontaneous, customary, and nonlegalistic forms of association with the intention of pursuing "great aims in common," as Tocqueville put it.\(^{85}\) The state, on the other hand, is a complex network of governmental institutions—including the military, the bureaucracy, and executive offices—that together constitute a legal or constitutional order. This order is undergirded by formal, official authority and aims to administer and control a given territory.\(^{86}\)

While distinct analytically, civil society is never wholly autonomous or completely separate from the activities of states. As Gramsci and others have argued, state rule often permeates civil society to consolidate power. In these instances, the state and civil society are practically indistinguishable as schools, councils, universities, churches, and even activist groups are regulated, monitored, or run by the state itself.\(^{87}\) At other times, societies are less saturated by the presence of the state and a robust civil society enjoys a significant degree of independence. But even here, it is inaccurate to assume a sharp distinction. The boundaries of the state are always ill defined and essentially amorphous, overlapping with civil society itself.\(^{88}\) Because the boundaries between

\(^{83}\) As a moment of social organization, civil society sits at an intermediate stage of collective development that finds its apex at the state. The state, however, does not supersede civil society but rather contains and preserves it in order to transform it into a higher level of social expression. The state's job, as it were, is to enable universal interest—in contrast to private interest—to prevail. In Hegelian terminology, it allows for the realization of ethical life in contrast to the abstract morality available in civil society. See Hegel's "Philosophy of Right," trans. T. M. Knox (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).

\(^{84}\) More recent formulations of civil society, informed by new understandings of the public/private distinction, include the family as part of civil society. See Cohen and Arato (fn. 5).

\(^{85}\) Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, ed. Jacob P. Mayer (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969), 520.


\(^{87}\) Gramsci (fn. 6), 238ff.

the state and civil society are elusive, porous, and mobile, when actions take place in one realm—although they have a distinct quality of efficacy about them—they have consequences for the other.

The same is true at the global level, and the notion of world civic politics is not meant to obscure this. While global civil society is analytically a distinct sphere of activity, it is shaped by, and in turn shapes, the state system. States’ actions greatly influence the content and significance of economic, social, and cultural practices throughout the world and vice versa. While not emphasized above, when TEAGs disseminate an ecological sensibility, pressure corporations, or work to empower local communities, their efforts are neither immune from nor wholly independent of state activity. In each instance, activist efforts intersect with the domain of the state even if this is not the initial intention. What is absolutely essential to recognize, however, is that it is not the entanglements and overlaps with states and the state system that make efforts in global civil society “political.” Transnational activism does not simply become politically relevant when it intersects with state behavior. Rather, its political character consists in the ability to use diverse mechanisms of governance to alter and shape widespread behavior. That these networks happen to imbricate the domain of states reveals more about the contours and texture of the playing field within which activists and others operate than about the character of politics itself.

At stake in this analysis, then, is the concept of world politics. Implicit is the understanding that politics in its most general sense concerns the interface of power and what Cicero called res publico, the public domain. It is the employment of means to order, direct, and manage human behavior in matters of common concern and involvement. Generically, at least, this activity has nothing to do with government or the state. Government, on the one hand, is an institution that coordinates and shapes public life, by virtue of its authority to make decisions binding on the whole community. The state, on the other hand, is a particular modality of government that emerged in the modern period and came to be associated with political rule itself.

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89 There are, of course, many instances when activists do target the state, in which the interface of global civil society and the state system is critical to strategies pursued by TEAGs. For an extended discussion of this type of action, see Paul Wapner, Environmental Activism and World Civic Politics (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, forthcoming).


91 Machiavelli was one of the first to recognize this conflation. It led to his “lowering the sights” of
sessing as it does military, administrative, legislative, and juridical bod-
ies, the state has become the most able mechanism to reach into and
affect the lives of vast numbers of people. Notwithstanding the exten-
sive governing capability of government and the state, however, neither
exhausts the realm of the political. Other actors govern public affairs;
other actors shape, direct, and order widespread practices regarding is-
sues of public involvement.\footnote{This point rests on the distinction be-
 tween government and governance. See James Rosenau, "Governance,
Order and Change in World Politics," in James Rosenau and Ernst-Otto
Czepiel, eds., Governance without Government: Order and Change in
World Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Oran
Young, George Demko, and Kilaparti Ramakrishma, "Global Environ-
mental Change and International Governance" (Summary and recom-
mendations of a conference held at Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.H.,
June 1991).}
The concept of world civic politics aims
to clarify conceptually the political character of governing efforts not
associated with the state. It specifies the quality of governance activists
employ and distinguishes it from the instrumentalties of state rule.

A final note on the conceptual boundaries of world civic politics: a
focus on the civil dimension of world collective life is not meant to ob-
scure the central importance of interstate relations in world affairs.
States are the main actors in the international system and will remain
so for the indefinite future. In this regard, the concept of world civic
politics is not meant to replace or subsume interstate relations. Rather,
it is offered as a way of augmenting scholarly understanding. It must
be considered alongside state-centered analyses. For this reason, it is
still worthwhile measuring and interpreting the lobbying efforts of
TEAGs and refining scholarly comprehension of NGO influence on
states. Nonetheless, a sensitivity to world civic politics makes clear that
this cannot be done to the exclusion of the more general societal ef-
forts employed by TEAGs and NGOS—a failure to take note of the
world civic efforts of nonstate actors leaves one with only a partial pic-
ture of world affairs and thus presents an incomplete understanding of
world politics itself.