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THE DYNAMICS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CAMPAIGNS

Donatella della Porta and Dieter Rucht[†]

Environmental movements and their activities are studied from various angles, by different methods, and at different levels. While both detailed studies on single incidents of conflict and broad overviews of movements are available, relatively little work has been done at the intermediate level between these extremes. We argue that it is fruitful to engage at this level by undertaking comparative analysis of environmental campaigns. Such studies could help deal with inconclusive observations and findings on the changes of environmental movements during the last three decades. We hypothesize that indeed environmental activism has changed remarkably. By and large, conflicts are no longer marked by a relatively simple constellation of one challenger facing one target or opponent. Instead, we find a complex web of involved actors reaching from local to international levels. These actors tend to form broad alliances, and to link on different issues. Also, their activities are not restricted to only one arena or strategy but involve all available channels, arenas, and action repertoires to have an impact. Quite often, we observe loose coalitions of groups that act in an implicit division of labor, thereby playing on their respective backgrounds, foci, and experiences. Given the variety of actors, their organizational forms and tactics on the one hand and their different contexts on the other, it is unlikely that a common pattern of conflict will emerge across various issues and geographical areas. This is all the more true when comparing environmental conflicts in the Western and Non-Western world.

Environmental movements and activities appear to have changed significantly over the last three decades—or at least their image produced by social scientists has changed. In earlier periods, social movement scholars emphasized the newness of environmental concerns; they described group structure as informal, the action repertoire as mainly confrontational and disruptive, and the ideology of many groups as anti-establishment. Quite often, this picture was influenced by a specific segment of the movement, in particular the groups opposing the construction of nuclear power reactors. In some countries, for example Germany, the campaigns against the nuclear sites and the transport of nuclear waste sometimes became violent confrontations between demonstrators and the police (Joppke 1993; Flam 1994).

Next, scholars tended to emphasize the institutionalization of environmental groups, their moderation, and the pragmatic interactions between environmental organizations and

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businesses, trade unions, and state authorities. This picture was mainly drawn from research on the large and formalized environmental organizations acting at the national and international levels, and the Green parties that had entered the parliamentary arena (Wörndl and Fréchet 1994; Chatterjee and Finger 1994; Blühdorn 1995; Jordan and Maloney 1997).

Recently, studies have focused on a new wave of radical environmental conflicts, such as anti-roads mobilization, animal-rights protest, local opposition to big infrastructure projects (airports, high-speed trains, dams, and waste incinerators), and genetic engineering (Seel, Paterson, and Doherty 2000). Where the bureaucratized environmental organizations were unable or unwilling to take the lead in radical protest, new and mostly informal organizations emerged locally, promoting radical ideology, equally radical action repertoires, and criticizing the established environmental groups as sell-outs. Such a critique was raised by groups such as Earth First! and Seashpherd Society in the U.S. and Critical Mass in Britain (Devall 1991; Doherty 1996). At the same time, the NIMBY-type organizations (Not In My Backyard) spread, opposing projects with highly negative environmental impacts by sometimes radical actions, but rarely transcending their local and parochial character (Bobbio and Zeppetella 1999). This is true, for example, of many groups that are part of the Citizens' Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste in the U.S. (Freudenberg and Steinsapir 1991; Gordon and Jasper 1996), and some groups opposing the high-speed railway system in Italy (see the article by della Porta and Andretta in this issue).

Overall, the descriptions and interpretations of the environmental movement are inconclusive. On the one hand, many argue that the movement as a whole has institutionalized and become toothless; on the other hand, some scholars point to the new radical groups that seem to be worlds apart from their established counterparts. It appears that these different observations are, at least partly, an artifact based on different approaches to study social movements. One group of social movement scholars rely on organizational approaches and concepts (e.g., resource mobilization theories), generally focusing on the large, formal, and usually more moderate groups that are easier to identify and interrogate than the small, informal and radical groups (e.g., Rawcliffe 1998; Brulle 2000). By contrast, other scholars prefer protest event analysis, thereby focusing on publicly visible confrontations in which small radical groups often acquire high visibility (e.g., Doherty 1997). A both more comprehensive and closer observation, however, may unveil a more complex picture of the environmental movement—a picture that probably also varies widely from issue to issue and from country to country. We suggest that this image can be better captured via the comparison of protest campaigns.

PROTEST CAMPAIGNS AS A UNIT OF ANALYSIS

Single movement organizations and protest events are useful objects of analysis. But when studied in small numbers, they hardly give a comprehensive picture of an entire social movement. When organizations and protest events at a given period are studied in large numbers, this is usually done quantitatively. Aggregate figures are provided to characterize a movement without considering that the researcher's constructed categories may misrepresent or neglect aspects of reality. Statistics usually fail to show when and how organizations interact, their range of activities, and what effects their combined efforts have in particular areas or cases of conflict. As a result, the social movements literature, including environmental movements, tends to fall into one of the following categories. On the one hand, we find broad descriptions, dealing with the movement as if it were a coherent entity. These broad essays are often impressionistic, not built on close empirical observation, and tend to ignore or simplify differences across countries, action levels (from the local to the international), ideological strands within the movements, and environmental issue areas. On

the other hand, there is a plethora of case studies on individual organizations and/or specific conflicts that offer rich empirical details but often lack theoretical guidance and an assessment of whether or not the case under investigation represents a broader phenomenon (see Kimber and Richardson 1974; Caldwell et al. 1976; Crowfoot and Wondolleck 1990).

We argue that research energies should be directed at the space between these two approaches; that is, below the level of general treatises and above the level of studying single groups or protests. We call for the *comparative study of environmental campaigns*. We define a *campaign* as a *thematically, socially, and temporally interconnected series of interactions that, from the viewpoint of the carriers of the campaign, are geared to a specific goal*. It may be useful to consider for a moment different well-known campaigns, such as the campaign for the eight-hour working day, the liberalization of abortion, or the economic divestment in South Africa during apartheid. All these campaigns had a concrete aim (instead of pursuing a vague or even utopian idea); they mobilized a limited set of actors and opponents focused on the specific campaign target, and they were temporally bounded (in contrast to a social movement that span several decades). Social movement campaigns usually evolve around a particular policy decision or project as an interconnected series of interactions. Overall, they constitute a *conflict story* whose individual stages can only be understood in the light of the previous events and the interests and identities of each of the different actors involved. Campaigns are often, but not necessarily, part of a broader and larger set of movement activities.

Campaigns are situated on a middle ground below the level of a movement but above the level of individual activities. As such, campaigns are units of analysis that neither lump together activities that actually are not linked by social interaction nor de-contextualize individual activities that are indeed part of a broader endeavor.

Campaigns usually encompass different kinds of actors, arenas, and different kinds of activities. Some campaigns may be local, last only a few weeks, and/or exhibit a relatively simple conflict structure. Others may range from the local to the transnational levels, carry on over years (or decades as in the case of women's suffrage), and include complex—and probably changing—conflict and alliance structures. Even in the latter case, a campaign is situated at a lower analytical level than a social movement. Whereas the goal of a social movement is to change broadly and fundamentally a social or political order, a campaign is perceived as only a step in the broader struggle. Different campaigns within a social movement may be completely unrelated and therefore will not influence each other, although the actors and external observers may still consider them as part of the same movement. For example, in the environmental movement, it is difficult to make grounded statements that do justice to different and largely independent networks of animal rights groups and anti-nuclear groups. If, however, we choose to study a campaign—for example the conflict around the construction of a nuclear reprocessing plant—we have a unit of analysis that represents a focused cluster of interactions and interrelated collective action frames, without being necessarily restricted to a short time period, a single arena, or a particular level of action.

A campaign focus captures the *dynamics* of a conflict with a particular emphasis on interactions. When looking at a campaign, we do not privilege, or even exclusively focus, on one particular actor or activity. Nor do we restrict our attention to a particular arena, say the street, thereby ignoring activities that occur behind closed doors, such as lobbying or bargaining. A campaign focus reveals a movement or parts of it in the complexity and variety of actions, but with regard only to those groups that are relevant. Regardless of a campaign's duration, size, and complexity, it will mirror aspects of the broader movement only in some ways. Because a campaign may be strongly shaped by the properties of a particular movement sector, the issue at stake, or the local environment, we cannot expect it to be necessarily representative for the movement's general strategies, range of actors, action

repertoires, and the like. Nevertheless, it can tell us much about a movement in action.

Although a whole movement instead of a campaign could be analyzed dynamically, it would require a much larger investment of resources. It may also require a different methodology. To address whole-movement dynamics, interviews with representatives of movement organizations would be necessary. They would reveal relationship patterns among the SMOs, their allies, and opponents, but may miss the dense and complex interaction patterns that develop in each campaign.

Comparing Campaigns

A single-campaign focus leaves us essentially with a case study, with its strengths and limitations. A case study provides deep insights into the nature, dynamics, and complexity of a phenomenon, but it cannot be representative. Atheoretical case studies may be useful in the first step of empirical research, collecting information to build preliminary hypotheses, but they often remain unfocused, purely descriptive, and add little to our knowledge after the first stage.

Our emphasis in this special issue is on the *comparative* study of environmental campaigns. Major axes of comparison are those across geographical areas, thematic issues, and time. In comparing various—and preferably many—campaigns along such lines, we transcend the individual case while at the same time avoiding unfounded generalizations. Comparing campaigns allows identification of patterns of divergence and convergence within and across movements that otherwise would remain unnoticed. We may identify changing patterns of relationship of environmental groups among each other and with their major reference groups, including adversaries, allies, bystanders, and the mass media.

The comparative study of campaigns also provides a basis for the type of questions raised in the introductory section: Is there a trend towards the institutionalization of environmental movement? Is the radicalization of some groups limited to particular kinds of issues or phases of conflict? Based on primary and secondary analyses of campaigns we can assess these trends. Moreover, the comparative study of campaigns helps answer further questions often raised in both the scientific and political discussion but rarely answered. First, is there a broader trend towards environmental radicalism, as recently indicated in Great Britain? Second, what is the relationship between disruptive and conventional activities, and between informal grassroots groups and established bureaucratized organizations? Third, is there a general trend towards both the “localization” and “transnationalization” of environmental protests at the expense of the national level of action (Rootes 1999)?

Particularly with the fashionable talk about globalization and the growing visibility of international environmental actors such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, World Wide Fund for Nature, and Climate Action Network, one gets the impression that these actors represent the general trends and traits of the environmental movement. It may also appear that these kinds of players are becoming more similar, thereby losing issue-specific and country-specific characteristics. Such impressions may be strongly influenced by the mass media but not grounded by close empirical investigation. Besides the reading of the national chapters’ documents, comparative research on the large environmental organizations’ involvement in specific national or subnational campaigns may indicate how local or national political cultures and structures influence them.

When Western scholars refer to environmental movements in mainstream literature and professional journals, they often—consciously or unconsciously—take their own experience and perspectives for granted, making sweeping generalizations. If they offer more refined pictures of cross-national differences, these pictures are usually based on a comparison of two or more Western countries where only the most prominent national environmental

groups and activities are considered (see for example van der Heijden et al. 1992). We suggest that a comparative analysis of protest campaigns allows more systematic investigation into spatial dimensions.

First, we assume that the situation in the highly industrialized and affluent North is quite different from the relatively poor developing countries in the South. Apart from different environmental problems themselves, the environmental activists' social and political backgrounds in the South have little in common with those of Northern activists (Taylor 1995).

Second, when focusing only on the North, there is a tendency to concentrate on the *most advanced* capitalist states where, in many respects, environmental conflicts do not differ dramatically. If, however, we also include in our comparative campaign analysis less economically advanced and powerful countries (e.g., Greece, Turkey, Portugal, and the former Eastern European communist states), then it is doubtful that Northern generalizations would hold.

Third, if we focus only on the most advanced capitalist countries, or only on one of them, it is not clear that the environmental movement can be easily characterized. Apart from differences across regions, we argue that, at least in some respects, activities at the national level may differ significantly from that at the *local level* (Roth 1994).

Finally, as policy studies suggest, politics depend on the specific *policies* addressed, and this is even truer concerning environmental policies (Lewansky 1997). The distribution of public goods and public bads, the levels of policy making, the visibility of issues, and the degree of relevant technical knowledge all influence the definition of the conflict, the "game the actors play," and the possible solution to the free-rider dilemma. Decisions to create a nature reservoir, to construct a dam, to constrain private traffic, to implement a high-speed railway, to launch a recycling campaign, or to locate a waste incinerator, tend to produce, by their very nature, different constellations of actors and conflicts.

Environmental Campaigns Patterns: Preliminary Observations and Hypotheses

Environmental campaigns are thematically specific and located in time and space. Nevertheless, the study of a single campaign, and even more so the comparative study of campaigns, raises several fundamental questions:

- Who are the actors involved in the campaigns? How are campaigns organized, orchestrated and framed? Can we identify, in the expected variation, some broader patterns and trends?
- Why are particular arenas, strategies, and forms of action chosen at given stages of conflict and how do other actors—opponents, authorities, allies, bystanders, media—react to these choices? Is there any sequential logic in the evolution of the conflict? If so, what does it look like and what are its driving factors? What precipitating events catalyze a campaign? What triggers spiral of conflicts? Are there relevant turning points?
- Which factors account best for the outcome of campaigns?

The contributions in this issue and the existing literature on environmental campaigns provide us with important, though sometimes contradictory, lessons for the study of social movements in general and environmental campaigns in particular. Below, we discuss these three sets of questions and present for each some ideas, empirical observations, and research hypotheses.

Organizing, Orchestrating, and Framing Environmental Campaigns

If we look at campaigns instead of a simple conflict constellation of one challenger facing one target or one opponent, we find a complex web of actors that, in most cases, reaches from the local to the transnational levels. They tend to form alliances, and link on different issues that are only partially covered by the nominal labels of the conflict (nuclear power, fishery, mining, airport extension, dam construction, rapid train etc.). Second, hardly any actor is restricted to only one arena or one strategy, although most actors may have preferences and act in an implicit division of labor.

By studying campaigns, we focus on interactions inside the movement sector, i.e., on the actors cooperating in the protest campaigns. Drawing on this issue's contributions, we find a high degree of interaction and interdependence between formal and informal organizations, NIMBY groups and radical ecological groupings, national and transnational NGOs—much similar to the complex patterns of policy networks (Kenis and Schneider 1991). The main ideological cleavages that characterized the past seem to be overcome in *pragmatic, although short-term alliances on concrete aims*. Nevertheless, tensions continue between supporters of radical versus moderate forms of action, local versus non-local identities, participatory versus professional models of organization. The articles on the anti-runway campaign in Manchester and the anti-high speed train in Tuscany suggest different types of rationality direct the different actors, providing bases for exchanges among them. This fuels competition but also offers opportunities for cooperation.

This image of heterogeneous, very loose configurations of actors seems to apply especially to the local level. At the national level, we often find relatively large, formal environmental organizations that usually are engaged in a range of issues (Rucht and Roose 2001). These organizations tend to cluster their activities around campaigns. The logic of the mass media as well as the attempt to win “non-ideological” supporters may explain the tendency of such organizations to work via focused campaigns (more generally on this, see Baringhorst 1997). By dossiers for the press, petitions, letters to their members, encounters with the political and economic elites, the large, formal environmental organizations try to win the public opinion to their policy positions. The Hernes-Mikalsen article in this issue illustrates that formal environmental organizations, such as Greenpeace, WWF, and Friends of the Earth, mobilized via specific campaigns to put pressure on international organizations, national governments, and fishing industries to influence fisheries policies. They interact mainly with professional players who tend to represent large organizations and institutions. Political parties are engaged in a power play where they seek to keep a distinct ideological profile.

By contrast, at the local level we find more informal groupings and settings, a more pragmatic, issue-oriented attitude to deal with diverging interests, and therefore more flexibility to enter or leave alliances, to rearrange actor constellations, and to communicate directly with concerned citizens. However, it is not so clear whether or not this leads to more moderate conflicts. We would argue that local conflicts exhibit a greater variety not only of alliance and conflict structures but also of strategies and forms of activities. Dependent on contingent external factors and different phases, conflicts may quickly radicalize or deradicalize, move from one arena to another, or spread from one territory to another. Also NIMBY positions tend to be more frequent at the local level compared to the national one, thus potentially creating unexpected and unstable interest coalitions. Moreover, precarious alliances with the local governments seem to be very common at the local level. Local governments often exploit environmental mobilization in a “double-game” strategy to gain advantages from the center for the local area. The della Porta-Andretta article provides impressive examples of this type of mobilization where local groups ally or conflict with both local governments and

national environmental organizations at different stages of decision making about a high-speed train project. A very similar pattern was found by Bobbio and Zeppetella (1999) in their analysis of a local conflict about high environmental impact industrial facilities, wherein the local groups represented the Davids, who often defeated the much more powerful industrial Goliaths. In all these cases, the main resource of the local groups was their capacity to form and mobilize territorial identities in a policy game marked by a concentration of concrete costs but diffuse benefits. By looking at campaigns, we shall also broaden our picture of the social groups involved in environmental protest. In the popular image, the ecological activist is a well-educated member of the new middle-class embracing post-materialist values. Many studies confirmed this image, especially when looking at the members of formal environmental organizations. However, if we study local campaigns on ecological issues, we see that ecological activists of the more “pure” type often ally with people from other social backgrounds and ideological beliefs. For example, peasants in areas where big infrastructure projects are planned or residents of working class neighborhoods where polluting installations are under construction may campaign together with the more typical members of environmental groups. This was the case in many campaigns against the deployment of nuclear plants or nuclear waste disposal in France and Germany (for instance, Touraine, Hegedus, Dubet and Wieviorka 1983; Rucht 1980, 1994). Also, the common image of activists motivated by true belief in their cause rather than material interest is challenged by the presence of social actors mobilized around specific material concerns, such as health risks and property devaluation.

This is all the more true in the southern part of the globe, where environmental activists are not predominantly the well-educated and affluent middle classes but rather the poor and deprived lower classes (native peoples, small farmers, and fishermen). Moreover, environmental issues in the South are often closely intertwined with other issues such as economic survival, civil rights, democracy, condition of women, protection of indigenous cultures, etc. Whereas environmentalists in the North may fight against the extinction of a butterfly or the preservation of a beautiful landscape, these may be luxury concerns for Southern activists. Consequently, we can expect environmental conflicts in the South to be marked by sharp dividing lines and more radical and anti-systemic activities, while those in the North tend to be more moderate and mediated, with often blurred lines of conflict. Doyle’s description (this issue) of resistance against mining in the Philippines exemplifies this. Similar patterns of conflict can also be found in countries such as Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, and Nigeria, to mention just a few (see Ekins 1992 and Fisher 1993 for a broader analysis). In these campaigns, transnational social movement organizations often provide resources to those operating in the South but, at the same time, they are influenced from the new ideas and issues developing in that part of the globe (Hudock 1999; Lewis 2000).

Besides the evolution of cooperation and competition among different actors and the effects of their interactions are also central questions. One of the crucial points here is whether one can observe a change in the discourse, organization, and actions of the various players as a consequence of reciprocal imitation and learning processes set in motion by their interactions. In general, it seems that campaigns provide opportunities for frame bridging (Snow and Benford 1988) between different discourses belonging to the cultural heritage of different actors. Often, especially at the local level, a successful campaign attracts actors with very different perspectives: economic lobbies and counter-cultural youth centers, religious groups and chapters of political parties, environmental movement organizations and organizations coming from other movements. During a protest campaign, actors frame the issue in terms of their own main concerns, but many case studies indicate that common master frames may emerge, linking together actors with different values and interests. The recent

mobilization against global pollution provides many examples of cross-fertilization among different SMOs and even different movements, often expressed in the construction of common themes and discourses (e.g., see Andretta, della Porta, Mosca, and Reiter 2002).

Arenas, Strategies of Action, and Conflict Dynamics

Campaign analysis also focuses attention on the interaction of different strategies. Traditionally, social movements have been characterized by their use of various protest forms, which were often perceived as part of an action repertoire. Because social movements are usually without easy institutional access, they must compensate by attracting media attention to sensitize public opinion and influence those actors—especially political parties—that have access to policy makers. The need to mobilize the media and public opinion has been considered both as a political resource and a limitation of social movements (Lipsky 1968). Though environmental groups may heavily rely on protest, a closer look at campaigns reveals that their action repertoire is much wider. Depending on the campaign's stage, they may focus on providing information, bargaining, lobbying, or seeking alternative solutions—a wide range of activities that cannot be subsumed under the label of protest. Research attention must be paid to the full array of activities in which the campaigners are involved.

Another question that comparative campaign studies should address is what arenas and strategies are chosen at which stages of conflict and how do other actors—opponents, authorities, allies, bystanders, and media—react to these choices. The protest-cycle research suggests that the evolution of action repertoires tends to follow a trend: mainly peaceful at the beginning, then including disruptive action at the peak of the cycle, and eventually a combination of radicalization and moderation at the end (Tarrow 1989; Rucht 1990; Koopmans 1993; della Porta 1995). Many studies also indicate that violence tends to emerge when the political opportunities and access to decision making are closed to challengers. Research on environmental campaigns may help to specify these hypotheses for periods in which protest is increasingly part of normal politics.

First of all, there are indications that the campaign repertoires become more dramatic when the political opportunities are closed. In the global South, for instance, environmental campaigns develop in a context that is rarely supportive to environmentalist actors. These tend to challenge small but powerful, and often corrupt, elites that profit from the exploitation of natural resources. Also, institutional channels to express dissent (e.g., litigation, elections) often do not exist in the South (or exist only on paper), so that environmental conflicts are hardly mediated. Rather, they occur as open power struggles, often involving disruptive and violent action on both sides.

Even in the North, radicalization often occurs when windows of policy opportunity close. Since campaigns usually evolve around a policy decision, protest tends to peak when policy making is visible and open to outside intervention. When a decision is taken against the will of the protesters, and all available channels of access prove to be fruitless, radical protest may appear as an alternative to demobilization. However, since protest is increasingly perceived as a normal form of politics, movement campaigns are often triggered as a reaction to actual policy decisions, no matter if the political opportunities are open or closed. Multi-level governance offers environmental actors the possibility to play institutional actors at different territorial levels against each other—with the most probable allies at the subnational and supranational levels.

At the local level, protest seems to spread especially where and when windows of opportunities open up in political or policy process. Protest intensifies when other political events (such as elections) sensitize the decision-makers to the public opinion, or when the policy process becomes more open in terms of either information or participation in the deci-

sion making (such as hearings). In these moments, the mobilization in the public sphere seems to be crucial to build a reservoir of legitimacy and credibility that can be used in lobbying and negotiations with the authorities, and especially when decision making moves from the front-stage to the back-stage. Protest often radicalizes in the final stages, when the decisions are made, and windows of opportunity start to close.

In the whole process, the media appear not only as an action arena but often as useful allies. Cooperation with the local press is often achieved on either political grounds (when the press is ideologically divided) or simply on commercial grounds, since protesters provide for news that can be sold. Not by chance, studies indicated that the media coverage in reporting protest is more inclusive at the local than the national level (Hocke 2000).

Especially in the southern hemisphere, we have also to look at the role of transnational allies—in particular International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) but sometimes also International Governmental Organizations (IGOs)—in providing resources and opportunities for mobilization. As Doyle's contribution indicates, it would be wrong to perceive the northern INGOs as the main sponsors, let alone performers, of protest campaigns in the South. Demands and responses, resources and strategies for environmental conflict are by no means mainly imported from outside. Even before the Seattle protest against the WTO, local and transnational organizations collaborated in global campaigns contesting the multilateral economic institutions, such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund, and some of their environmentally disastrous projects in the Southern part of the world (O'Brien, Goetz, Scholte, and Williams 2000).

Effects and Outcomes of Campaigns

Although until recently we knew little about the factors that influence the outcomes of environmental campaigns, this is a particularly relevant aspect of analysis for several reasons. First, the outcomes of protest have been generally understudied (Giugni, McAdam, and Tilly 1999; della Porta and Diani 1999) and deserve more attention. Second, since campaigns are usually focused on a specific policy decision, campaign analysis offers better chances to assess impacts than in movements with broad and diffuse goals. Third, some campaign outcomes may not only be relevant to the actors directly involved but also can have repercussions on the broader movement. As indicated by the experiences with the Equal Rights Amendment in the U.S. or national laws on abortion in various countries, some campaign issues become non-negotiable objectives for the movement as a whole. A visible failure to reach its aims may push the movement towards pessimism and frustration. Conversely, a lack of decision, or long implementation procedures, may generate escalation in conflicts between activists and the police—as it has been the case in the long-lasting conflicts around the construction or enlargement of airports (on the German case, see Rucht 1984).

Only a few studies so far have looked at impacts of environmental campaigns and movements beyond single cases (Huberts 1989; Midttun and Rucht 1994; Lewis 2000). These analyses suggest that policy impacts are an outcome of a complex set of variables in which movement strategies are just one component. Among other things, movement strategies and impacts also depend on structural factors that cannot, or only to a limited extent, be influenced by the movements. This is also a reason why the conflicts and their outcomes differ widely across issues and political contexts. We can visualize these general reflections on environmental conflicts in different spatial contexts and periods in table 1.

Table 1. Prevailing Images of Environmental Conflicts in Different Geographical Areas

Territory	1970s and 1980s	Contemporary
Southern hemisphere	Isolated conflicts, mainly local, overshadowed by bread-and- butter issues	Conflicts ranging from local to transnational; link to class issues, poverty, economic exploitation, etc.; radical protest
Northern hemisphere a) Local	Prevalence of grass roots activism	Highly diverse patterns of conflict; flexible constellations
b) National and transnational	Separation of conservationist and radical ecology groups; bipolar conflict constellation	coalition building; institutionalization of environmental organizations; conflict management and mediation techniques

The Contributions to this Issue

We have gathered articles that investigate and compare the interactive and processual dynamics of major contemporary environmental conflicts in different issue domains and geographical areas. All contributions address, from different viewpoints and in different places, several of the aspects and questions mentioned above. To some extent, these articles allow the reader to assess if the generalizations in this introductory essay reflect contemporary environmental activism.

Having only the space for a few articles, we had to be very selective. One important criterion was to secure variety across issues. An exclusive focus on one particular issue domain, say nuclear power or genetic engineering, could lead to a one-sided judgment about the broader trends in environmental conflicts. We selected issues such as transport systems, dams, fishing, and mining that represent major terrains of dispute but, at the same time, are heterogeneous actors and interests. Second, we wanted to maximize regional variety across countries and continents to get a better sense of the impact of particular political systems and cultures. Apart from Rucht's study, which that refers to cases from many countries, the articles analyze campaigns in Great Britain, Italy, Germany, Norway, Australia, and Philippines, offering geographical and cultural variety. The articles are revised versions of papers that were presented at a workshop of European Consortium for Political Research in Mannheim in March 1999. Only Rucht's article originated from a different context, a 1998 conference in Tampere (Finland).

The article by Hans Kristian Hernes and Knut H. Mikalsen on environmental groups and the management of marine resources discusses international campaigns carried out by large and formal environmental organizations. Addressing the challenges that uncontrolled fishing poses to marine ecosystems, the authors focus on the campaigns for sustainable fisheries organized by Greenpeace, WWF, and Friends of the Earth. These campaigns, which share a common concern with sustainable development and the defense of biodiversity, differ in their emphasis on disruptive protest and their focus on public or private decision makers, reflecting specialization among different environmental organizations. Past successes resulted

in a preference for pragmatism, dialogue, and institutional approaches rather than disruption—as the authors say, working *with* rather than *against* established management institutions.

Timothy Doyle's article addresses the interesting and understudied topic of environmental campaigns that cross the North-South divide. Doyle analyzes the protest against the Western Mining Corporation, an Australian-based multinational mining company with operations in Australia and the Philippines. After describing the company's track record, Doyle compares the strategies developed by environmental movements in Australia and the Philippines to protest against mining. In particular, he focuses on the building of large anti-mining coalitions of seemingly disparate groups, stressing the differences between the two countries and the two national environmental campaigns.

After this look at campaigns crossing national borders, the next two articles focus on local conflicts. Steve Griggs and David Howarth's contribution examines the protest against the building of the second runway of Manchester's airport. Here, two main actors mobilized: conservative local residents and more radical ecologists. Using insights from rational choice theory and discourse theory, the authors analyze the interplay of interest and identity inside the two main actors as well as the "unlikely working coalition" among them. In the different steps of the campaigns, the two groups appear as more or less successful in overcoming their specific collective action dilemma.

In a similar vein, the article by Donatella della Porta and Massimiliano Andretta study the interactions of various political actors during a protest campaign against the construction of the Alta Velocità (high speed railways) in Tuscany. The protest campaign involved formal environmental movement organizations as well as political parties and local institutional actors who often staged protest. The main actors of the protest were, however, the local environmental movement organizations that were formed in most of the areas directly menaced by the project. Looking at the historical evolution of the eight-year long campaign, the authors investigate cooperation and competition among the more ideologically pure environmental organizations that used more moderate forms of action and the local, single-issue and sometimes NIMBY-motivated groups that were more prone to protest. Drawing on a political process approach, the dynamics of the protest are explained by reference to a multilevel policy making process, involving local, national, and even international political institutions. Moreover, a distinction is introduced between political opportunities and policy opportunities, all framed within the local political culture. The strategies used by the different groups and their internal and external interactions are to a large extent influenced by the different steps of the policy making process.

In the last contribution, Dieter Rucht compares mobilization against large techno-industrial projects in different geographical areas, historical periods, and over different issues. Mainly drawing on campaigns against the construction of dams, he demonstrates that during the course of the twentieth century opposition has become almost ubiquitous, broader in thematic scope, more radical and, in part, truly transnational. Recent cases show that the formerly existing elite consensus about the need and overwhelming benefit of such projects is fading away. Even international organizations such as the World Bank have become sensitive to the negative side-effects of certain large-scale infrastructures and increasingly engage in more comprehensive cost-benefit analyses that go beyond mere economic criteria.

Taken together, the contributions in this special issue challenge the traditional way of perceiving environmental protest actors—both the more bureaucratized and the grass-roots groups—as being engaged exclusively in either direct confrontation with an opponent or seeking public attention and support to indirectly influence the policy makers. Instead, the protest groups are involved in *direct interactions* with virtually all the relevant actors that influence policy decisions at different steps and at different levels. Environmental groups

contact parties, local politicians, firms, newspapers etc. They not only protest, but also lobby, bargain, present proposals, inform, argue, threaten, etc.

These findings contradict some of the conventional wisdom about environmental conflicts and broader studies of protest and social movements, therefore requiring new analytical perspectives. As stated above, we think it is useful to focus on the *complex interplay of the key actors*—with a particular emphasis on social movement groups—that often act in a parallel fashion in different arenas (such as the streets, advisory committees, courts, parliament and government, referenda, mass media). Our argument is that these activities do not follow the ideal type of a conflict cycle or a policy cycle, as the mainstream of the literature suggests. Actors tend to choose their strategies, conflict arenas, and forms of action not according to a predefined logic but based on situational and contingent cost-benefit calculations that are always made in the light of a large set of factors, including short and long term expectations, the strength of adversaries, attitudes of bystanders and the larger audience, reactions of their own members and adherents, etc. In line with the suggestion of neo-institutionalists (March and Olsen 1989), the local culture and the organizational history of the various groups pre-select the range of strategies and targets that are considered as appropriate in the various steps of a campaign.

Taking into account the empirical complexity of the various campaigns, we also argue that we have to reconsider and expand our theoretical instruments, which essentially refer to a bipolar constellation of actors and simplistic concepts of conflict cycles and policy cycles. In order to explain the dynamics and outcomes of conflicts, we need to unpack and refine concepts such as the political process approach (Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982) and the idea of multi-organizational fields (Curtis and Zurcher 1973; Klandermans 1989). It is important to recognize the multiplicity of actors, the relevance of different reference groups for each of the actors, and the complex interplay within a multi-organizational field in which the stake of the conflict, the strategies and forms of action, and the promoted frames and arguments can only be understood in the light of previous interactions and outcomes. These considerations also shed a critical light on the alleged superiority of one particular theoretical concept in social movement research to explain the level and kind of collective mobilization, be it relative deprivation, resource mobilization, political opportunity structure, or identity and framing concepts. We argue that the explanatory power of these theories can hardly be assessed on the general level but that they have to prove their usefulness with respect to specific questions regarding specific kinds and phases of conflict. The comparative study of campaigns is a promising way to submit these theories to empirical scrutiny.

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