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Beyond Rainbows and Butterflies: Environmental Politics and the Scale and Scope of NGO Activities.

Abstract

The article examines the role played by NGOs in international environmental policy processes. Special attention is given to the relationship between the effectiveness of NGO interventions and the scale and scope of their actions. Scale is defined in the article with reference to the spatial focus of actions taken by NGO groups, and scope is seen as defining the relevance of these focused actions within a broader interdependent and inter-temporal policy discourse. Taking this interdependent, inter-temporal and inter-spatial view of the policy process provides a basis for exploring the interdisciplinary importance of attempts to enhance the effectiveness of NGO actions relative to the scale and scope of their activities.

It is argued that the presence of NGOs in environmental politics has to some extent been determined by the existence of policy vacuums that prompt responses to the perceived need for a more inclusive approach to these forms of politics. However, a number of theoretical examples are used to illustrate that enhanced inclusiveness is not a sufficient condition for ensuring more fair policy processes. The example of NGO participation in Senegalese marine fishery policy discourse is used to substantiate this point.

On the basis of theoretical and practical observations, it is argued that attempts to realize greater inclusiveness can detract from the effectiveness of policy processes through adding additional voices to already noisy policy arenas. This is compounded by the temporal, special, and conceptual interdependence characterizing many of these spaces in the first place. As an alternative, I argue that the efficacy of policy processes can be enhanced through a more synergistic approach that identifies common objectives across diverse and often conflicting rationalities. The concept of sustainable development is seen as one that is capable of providing the macro rational orientation required for the realization of a more synergistic attrition of ideas. And NGO groups are seen as the entities most capable of the flexibility that is required for advocating that cause.

Keywords: Environmental Politics, NGOs, Sustainable Development, Senegal, Fisheries.

Introduction

Political responses to the pressures that human activities place upon the earth's ecological systems have been diverse. Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) can be described as an important component of the emerging spread of responses to environmental issues. However the

nature of the forces that these groups exert upon policy processes is not well understood.

In a 2006 article published in the Graduate Journal of Social Science, Denis Chartier stated that being able to understand the role that NGO groups play in international environmental policy processes requires that the nature of their actions and the scales that they work at be examined. Chartier suggests that the question of scale has an important temporal dimension since the urgency of environmental problems requires swift action, while their complexity requires a longer-term view. (Cartier, 2006, 58)

It is the purpose of this article to unpack the role of NGOs in international environmental politics with reference to the *scale*, defined with reference to the spatial focus of actions taken by NGO groups, and *scope*, which defines the relevance of these focused actions within a broader interdependent and inter-temporal policy discourse. The interdependent, inter-temporal and inter-spatial view of the policy process in turn provides a basis for exploring the interdisciplinary importance of attempts to refine NGO actions relative to the scale and scope of their activities.

The article argues that the presence of NGOs in environmental politics has to some extent been determined by the existence of policy vacuums, and urges a response to the perceived need for a more inclusive approach to these forms of politics. A number of theoretical examples are used to illustrate that enhanced inclusiveness of perspectives is not necessarily a sufficient condition for ensuring more desirable policy outcomes. The example of NGO participation in Senegalese marine fishery policy discourse is used to substantiate theoretical claims with more practical observations. On the basis of the theoretical and practical observations that are made, it is recommended that in certain cases more desirable environmental policy outcomes require that NGOs come to grips with conceptual spaces that will enable them to make sense of already noisy policy arenas.

NGO Identity

States have been criticized for failing to act appropriately and timeously in response to a range of issues, including environmental issues. It has been noted that this perceived failure to act appropriately and timeously to various issues has created policy vacuums that can be, and have been, filled by NGO activities. Thus it has been argued that:

The search for effective and substantial environmental reform has to be pursued in a domain below and beyond the nation-state level. The predominant answer is to value the style of NGO politics that has emerged from this fragmented and diffused political situation. (Doyle and Mc Eachern, 2001, 85)

On their web page: *The NGO Café*, The Global Development Research Centre suggests that NGOs can be distinguished by their orientation and their level of operation. (The NGO Café) For Authors like James Connely and Graham Smith further distinctions between NGO groups are necessary. According to the authors, important distinctions must also be made in terms of who and what different groups represent, and by whom they are recognised as being legitimate.

Just as NGOs vary in their orientation and level of operation, the forms of action employed by these groups are also divergent. The forms of action employed include informal contact and influence over politically influential individuals and clusters, formal lobbying, letters and petitions, scientific research and reports, consumer boycotts, court action, demonstrations and marches, media stunts, non-violent civil disobedience, and violent direct action.

From this list, in 2006 Nwabuo Uzodike and I identified four broad categories for the roles played by NGOs in the national and international policy settings. The categories were: placing critical attention on issues that may otherwise have been sidelined; providing scientific evidence for critical engagement for claims and guidelines in policy processes; rallying popular support from civil societies in an attempt to evoke political impetus for formal action; and finally, in some cases, NGOs play roles as mediators and arbitrators for the negotiation of new policies within and between governments, commercial and industrial entities. (Stilwell and Uzodike, 2006, 35)

If we aim to evaluate the impacts that NGO activities have for policy settings, the activities of these groups can be further reduced to questions surrounding the nature of the influence that their activities have. It is here that issues of scale and scope become important because it can be argued that the effectiveness with which orientation is given to the scale and scope of NGO actions - within what may be highly interdependent policy environs, plays a determining role for the credibility of the influence exerted.

We can break the different kinds of influence that NGOs may wield in policy processes

into the following categories: power to be heard, power to enter the policy process, power to implement policy changes, and importantly, the power to realise productive changes.

Having the power to be heard can involve the application of all of a particular group's functions, ranging from drawing critical attention, providing scientific evidence, and rallying popular support, to mediating and arbitrating. However for this power type the extent of the group's effectiveness is limited to simply highlighting an issue, thus drawing critical attention. The power to enter a policy process on the other hand is likely to have a more direct impact upon policy outcomes, though it is not guaranteed to do so. Again the realisation of this type of power can involve all four NGO functions, though once within the policy process influence will be focussed on potential to provide scientific evidence and perform mediation and arbitration. The power to implement policy changes implies the successful application of any number of the four main NGO functions, though the extent to which the policy change is productive is not guaranteed. This observation highlights the fourth, and possibly most important, type of power: the power to realise productive policy changes. It is this type of power that requires more than the simple performance of the four main NGO functions, but requires an intuitive understanding of the likely impacts of those actions relative to the subtleties of given settings.

Arenas for Exclusion

There are a number of areas where policy vacuums may emerge in policy processes as the result of systemic marginalisation of potentially relevant perspectives, and as I have suggested, these areas are frequently capitalised upon by NGO groups. Although at academic levels the multidisciplinary nature of these areas may sometimes mandate separate treatment, NGOs can find themselves simultaneously operating in a number of different realms of policy discourse. It is therefore important to identify some of the policy areas and/or dynamics that create an impetus for NGO involvement. The first that will be discussed here concerns democratic systems of governance.

Electoral democracy has been perceived to be insufficiently inclusive of all the relevant views that may be held by sometimes-marginalized polities. For this reason *deliberative democracy* can be seen as a means to achieving greater inclusiveness and participation of

marginalised minority groups, which in turn leads to greater enlightenment among participants. (Farrelly, 2003, 4) Deliberative democracy depends upon the creation of discussion groups which aim to strengthen the voice of the agents who may otherwise be unheard. As such this process of inclusion attempts to make democracy more democratic, but despite this effort in practice deliberative democratic processes tend to be dominated by the more articulate, more confident, more concerned, more domineering, more respected, and above all, more present participants. The *ideal speech* that is required for participants to remain rational and objective seldom keeps its integrity. (Mouffe, 2000, 6) As a result the outcomes of these deliberative processes tend also to reflect the imperatives of these more dominant groups. One example of this is the division that has occurred between the interests of current and future generations in sustainable development discourse. This is the case because the interests of future generations are easy to overlook at political and policy levels since these groups are effectively absent.

In cost benefit analyses, which are often used to determine the merits or de merits of a particular policy proposal, a similar dynamic exists. Cost-benefit analysis attempts to provide a clear decision criterion to a policy proposal based on the addition and subtraction of the cost and benefit points as a means to evaluating which are the most and least beneficial courses of action. (Kopp, Krupnick and Toman, 1997, 1) In this instance, again, only more obvious and more easily accountable factors are considered while other considerations, which may be too hard to understand or account for are more or less ignored, despite the possibility of their single or aggregate importance being great. (Kopp, Krupnick and Toman, 1997, 7) Such is the case with many natural resource and environmental policy dilemmas. Although the micro accounting benefits of producing a product may be clear, the long term macro environmental or social costs associated with the production of that good may not be.

Garret Hardin's observations in his work, *Tragedy of The Commons*, also illustrate how certain modalities take precedence over others in economic life. In this instance, which normally deals with common pool resources, a free rider effect occurs. The free rider effect is underpinned by a logic which suggests that it is relatively easy and personally beneficial to consume an extra unit of a shared resource at the shared cost of other users. Although the benefit of consuming an extra unit of the good is direct and may be large, the cost to all users (one's self included) is a partitioned cost and thus less grave than the personal benefit of the free riding activity. (Hardin, 1968, 162)

As a result governance decisions made in interdependent policy environments may frequently be insufficiently inclusive of relevant interests. Groups, such as NGOs, who view governance or policy processes as insufficiently inclusive may attempt to counterweight this lack of objectivity.

However matters of scale and scope raise some important potential problems for NGOs operating in these opened policy spaces. First, NGO groups may compete to occupy a similar policy space. In some cases this may be desirable, though in others competing to fill common political spaces may mean competition for financial and technical resources. Having to compete for these resources can have the affect of making neither of the groups as effective as they might otherwise be. Second, actions with a relatively narrow normative focus - perhaps aiming to make a policy process inclusive of a certain set of under or un-represented interests, may be rendered ineffective by the nature of the dynamics within the broader policy process. If effective policy responses are desired, it may not be sufficient to simply lend a voice to the voiceless in instances where the 'new voices' are likely to be eroded by other more dominant ones engaged in the policy process.

Further, the realization of narrow policy goals can be counterproductive. Depending upon the nature of the larger context NGO actions can succumb to the paradox that sometimes characterises the difference between micro and macro rationality. Just as Hardin's subjects are compelled to farm more cattle or fish more fish, NGOs may represent micro interests that can lead to counterproductive outcomes at macro levels: "Micro rationality often leads to macro irrationality, as evidenced by the paradox of thrift, the tragedy of the commons, the prisoner's dilemma, the tyranny of small decisions, and the arms race." (Daly, 1997, 113)

William Odum suggests that society is managed as a conglomerate of public decisions. Individuals and small groups form the lower 'nests' of decision making while higher levels are occupied by elected governments and smaller bodies within governments. The higher levels are theoretically supposed to be comprised of experts who collectively make rules that are applied to the decisions and decision-making processes that occur at the lower echelons of the conglomerate. (Odum, 1982, 728)

In some cases small groups or individuals arrive at decisions without the 'supervision' of the expert elected authorities. (Odum, 1982, 728) When we consider the advent of systemic marginalisation, or highly complex interests sets in policy processes, it may be difficult for even

the expert authorities to provide policy orientation that ensures an objectively desirable outcome.

Where the dominant interests within policy processes represent the realisation of a number of actors who base their actions on the attainment of their micro rational interests, and a cleavage exists between micro rational and macro rational interests, a tyranny of small decisions results. The central theme is the notion that whether or not decision processes are highly inclusive or are led by expert authorities, the aggregate of small decisions, may not lead to a desirable outcome for the total.

Applying this view to the participation of NGO groups in environmental forums raises some key questions about the nature of the influence that NGO groups may seek in different policy environments. If these groups seek to influence the opinions of experts in the upper nest, then their actions must be measured against those of the other actors attempting to influence the upper nest/s. A lot also depends upon the competence of the upper nest. In some cases the upper nests may attempt to please all groups, and this can lead to poor results for all. In others, they may be biased, in which case groups wishing to effect changes may be best off taking action for reform in the decision processes.

Groups seeking a particular change must anticipate the responses of the other actors comprising their interpretive community to their actions. For example NGO preservationist groups who seek to preserve ecological systems may aim to close access to a useful environmental resource. In a broader system, achieving this goal can be counterproductive at a larger scale if as a result of being denied access to the important resource, user groups place additional pressure on other (perhaps equally) vulnerable resources. In another example, placing rigid restrictions may simply cause users to transgress those restrictions, which in turn places an additional burden on management systems that must now have the capacity to deal with new kinds of problems. In such examples actions aimed at solving one problem simply create others, and in some cases the new problems might be more serious than the old.

Identifying a transcendental ethic that is capable of giving trajectory to such policy dilemmas is therefore a desirable goal. The extent to which the concept of sustainable development is capable of providing this policy orientation is therefore an important point for discussion.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development has long been viewed as a concept that is capable of providing orientation for issues where a relationship between economic, social and ecological forces is at stake. Sustainable development discourse is, however, fraught with disagreement.

Theorists contend in varying degrees that “*man-made*” capital is substitutable for *natural capital*. These conflicting views have given rise to two broad schools of thought within the sustainable development discourse. Proponents of so-called *weak sustainability* claim that natural and conventional capital are substitutes, thus if one divests in one form of capital while investing in the other, sustainability can be achieved. Proponents of *strong sustainability*, on the other hand, argue that the two broad capital types are complements and that each must be maintained intact for sustainable interaction between the two to be realised. (Magill, 1997, 245) Still others such as Francis Laloë argue that perceptions and definitions of capital also evolve over time (Laloe, 2007, p 90) thus supporting the view that the truth regarding the *weak versus strong* substitutability debate probably lies somewhere in the middle ground between the two opposed views. Arguments, such as those offered by Herman Daly, who views natural and conventional capital as being “fundamentally complements and only marginally substitutes” (Daly, 1996, 76) may also occupy this space.

On the question of political implementation of the concept, Olivier Godard has suggested that a political process toward sustainable development can neither be derived directly from an inter-temporal economic optimisation informed by market prices, nor from scientific understandings of biophysical processes upon which the reproduction of the natural environment depends. Godard argues this on the basis that imperfect understandings of the complexity of each of these two fields, and the relationships between them, dictate an element of uncertainty regarding policy processes toward sustainable development. (Godard, 1996, 17) For his reason, the author gives importance to the *precautionary principle* as a means to tempering decision processes that may lead to ecologically unsustainable economic activities. (Godard, 1994, 17)

One implication of Godard's view is that predictions based upon articulations of the relationships between environmental and economic factors as we understand them are unlikely to be credible. We suggest that one response to this problem is to measure the relationships between

economic activities and ecological impacts post hoc as a means to understanding their consequences. This article highlights, however, that the consequences of economic activities are not only important from an economic point of view, but from broader societal ones too. Thus the search for a transcendental ethic for providing orientation for the scale and scope (particularly) of NGO policy actions will rest upon an argument for a system of measurement that can be used to explain the societal impacts of given economic policy choices which combine economic, ecological, and social aspects.

International trade systems have provided an important example of how the interconnectedness of global economic, social, political, and ecological systems can mean that actions based on one ethic pertaining to a particular policy domain can result in problems for another.

The Case of Fisheries Management in Senegal

Today, it is widely thought that Senegal's fish stocks are under severe threat of depletion due to heavy fishing pressure on the country's fishery resources. (Kaczynski and Fluharty, 2002, 82) This fishing pressure results from the activities of three main fishing sectors, these are the local artisanal sector, the local industrial sector, and the foreign industrial sector.

The governance of the Senegalese fisheries sector directed by the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1982 gave legal jurisdiction to coastal states over the marine resources found within a 200 mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) adjacent to those states. Controversially Article 62 of the UNCLOS mandates that a nation cannot sell access to already fully exploited resources, though they should make resources that are not fully exploited available to foreign entities. (Brown, 2005, 1) Joseph Catanzano has argued that concurrent usage of a common fishery resource by numerous user groups that emerges as a result of implementing Article 62 can lead to inefficiencies in fishery use. (Catanzano, 2003, 5) The view suggests that Article 62 fails to recognize that some groups may be more efficient than others in the production of fishery products. The legal mandate prescribed by this article therefore prevents fishery management authorities from allocating access to fish stocks in accordance with the comparative advantages that some users may have over others in

the production of certain fishery products. The ramifications of this issue, it is argued, lead in turn to sub-optimal exploitation of the fishery that discords with the approach that would be recommended by the HO theory of comparative advantage that was discussed earlier in this article.

Post the UNCLOS, one of the first major institutional attempts to address the global fisheries problem was the development of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation's *Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries* (CCRF) in 1995.

Noting that fisheries industries had become a market driven, dynamically developing sector, that is driven by growing international demand for fish and fishery products, and that fishery resources could not sustain such growth indefinitely, the United Nations Committee on Fisheries (COGI) and the FAO put together a strategy for the development responsible fisheries management. (UNFAO, 2005)

This code sets out principles and international standards of behavior for responsible practices with a view to ensuring the effective conservation, management and development of living aquatic resources, with due respect for the ecosystem and biodiversity. The Code recognizes the nutritional, economic, social, environmental and cultural importance of fisheries and the interests of all those concerned with the fisheries sector. (UNFAO, 2005)

Although certain parts of the CCRF are based upon relevant rules of international law, it remains voluntary, and thus only provides guidelines for responsible fishery management. (UNFAO, 2005) For example article 5 of the code simply states that: "States, relevant intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations and financial institutions should work for the adoption of measures to address the needs of developing countries." (UNFAO, 2005) By making recommendations without identifying the complex causes that have led to the need for these recommendations, the code does not address many of the systemic causes of weak fishery management regimes, but rather presents a prognosis of the symptoms. As such, the CCRF remains a necessary but insufficient step toward the sustainable development of fisheries.

Although I shall not give an exhaustive review of all of the policy responses to the over-fishing problem here, responses such as the UNCLOS and the CCRF can be argued as being indicative of the failure of policy responses to achieve sufficient resonance with the complexity

of interdependent fisheries systems where ecological, social, economic and political factors are at play and at stake. This poses a problem for the credibility of what Odum (1982) would describe as the 'upper nests' of fisheries policy discourse. The extent to which actors such as NGO groups can offer a means to reviving the credibility of the policy orientation in fisheries actions therefore becomes an important question.

Governance in the Senegalese Fishery and the Role of NGOs

In the Senegalese context, the forces that influence the government perception of what is a good fisheries policy are diverse and often conflicting. As a result of this, fisheries policies in the region can be described as diffused.

On the one hand the motivation for signing fishing access agreements with foreign partners such as the EU is clear from a financial point of view, since these agreements entail substantial lump sum payments to the Senegalese government for fisheries access.

On the other hand the local artisanal fishing sector provides comparatively little direct financial compensation to the government since it is relatively informal, though the sector performs crucial functions in terms of employment and food security, as well as other cultural functions. The significance of the sector to the local population gives the interests of artisanal fishers strong electoral power. (Samba, 2006) The third sector, the national industrial sector, is less important than the foreign industrial sector in terms of financial compensation, and less important than the artisanal sector in terms of employment and food security, but still important in terms of the development of more industrialised local fisheries activities.

For the Senegalese fisheries management authorities, the different import of each of these sectors has resulted in a policy *mélange* that attempts to satisfy all groups. Access agreements have been signed and resigned with the EU in order to satisfy the desire to earn lump sum finances, and possible other economic benefits related to EU development aid. At the same time policy makers have attempted to satisfy the employment and food security interests of the local population through providing subsidies to artisanal fishers, (Dione, Sy, and Ndiaye, 2005, p 33.) as well as granting fishing licenses to national industrial fishing companies. This 'the more the merrier' policy approach has supported overcapacity in the country's fishery which has led to a

decline in many of the country's important fish stocks. After the previous agreement expired in 2006, the EU did not renew their access agreement with Senegal. Although the reasons for this are not yet crystal clear, a common suspicion is that Senegal's overexploited fish stocks are no longer interesting to the EU in the light of more favorable access arrangements available among the country's neighbors.

As a result of this decline, and the competition between user groups that is seen to emerge as a result, a number of NGO actions have been taken as a means to filling associated policy vacuums.

The main response to the Senegalese fishery problem attempts to de-marginalise certain interests in order to achieve policy outcomes through the application of all of the four core functions that have been highlighted.

One of the largest projects aimed at addressing the fisheries dilemma is the *Programme de Conservation de la Zone Côtière d'Afrique de l'Ouest* (PRCM), (Programme for the Conservation of the West African Coastal Zone) which has been created in a partnership between a grouping of West African states called the Sub Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC), the World Wildlife Fund, the International Union for the Conservation of nature (IUCN), Wetlands International, and the *Fondation Internationale du Banc d'Arguin* (FIBA) (International Foundation for the Banc d'Arguin national park of Mauritania). (Fisheries Agreements, 2006)

Among other actions, the project aims to improve the negotiation abilities of member states of the CSRP through improving transparency for the management of marine resource in the West African region by boosting participation and collaboration between member states and concerned actors. (Fisheries Agreements, 2006)

The actions taken under this project include attempts to address the poor ability among representatives of CSRP countries to negotiate fishing deals; the lack of coherence and coordination among CSRP states when negotiating fishing deals with foreign partners; the lack of transparency, and participation of all actors who are concerned by the negotiation process; insufficient knowledge about the marine resources for which access rights are sold; insufficient follow up monitoring on the implementation of fishing agreements; and the economic and political dependence of CSRP countries upon fishing agreements. (Fisheries Agreements, 2006)

In this instance the actions taken by these NGOs include all four forms of actions where critical attention will be generated through the publication of materials. Scientific evidence will

be provided through research processes in the field, popular support will be rallied through lobbies in Europe and also as a function of the critical attention drawn to the problem. Finally mediation and arbitration will be performed as a product of activities aiming to bring participants together in deliberative processes. The aims of these actions can be categorised as attempts to realize their power to be heard, their power to enter the policy process, their power to implement policy changes, and indeed their power to realise productive changes. Problematically the extent to which the fourth of these goals is realised will be dictated by the nature of the broader policy process which in turn is dependent upon an array of external variables.

For example, Carolyn Deere has suggested however that the EU weakens the bargaining position of West African states by negotiating fishing deals separately with each state. This creates a fear that if states do not comply sufficiently with EU demands, the fishing deal will be lost to neighboring states, along with the financial compensation that accompanies it. (Deere, 1999, 43) This factor combined with the large, often conflicting, and very complex forces faced by fisheries management authorities in the region makes it difficult to coordinate attempts to ensure the sustainable development of fisheries in West Africa.

The situation illustrates how at a regional level, as at an individual national one, the fisheries politics is diffused by conflicting interests. At an intercontinental level the trends are not much different. There have been various institutional attempts to address these issues, but most have failed to address any more than the symptoms of conflicts.

The extent to which NGO actions aiming at entering into regional fisheries policy processes for the purpose of achieving the sustainable usage of the regions resources is likely to be a product of the extent to which these groups are capable of uniting the vision of currently competing user groups. Although the project mandates a more participative approach to regional fisheries policy, it seems unlikely that more inclusive processes will provide a realistic alternative in the absence of a shift from actions taken on the basis of micro rational interests of participants.

The problematic results of Senegalese policy approaches that aim to accommodate all parties and their interests provide practical evidence that achieving sustainable fisheries will require actions to be based upon an overarching ethic rather than through achieving greater inclusiveness for a wide spread of conflicting ones.

Although we have seen how there is a natural impetus to simply make policy process

more inclusive in all kinds of ways, a real solution to a complex policy problem such as this is likely to require a paradigm shift from micro rational actions to actions based on a transcendental scope, where policy actions are taken as a means to satisfying a more universal synergistic ethic. In this case progress will not engender simply including a wider spread of already competing micro rational actors and interests, but will require forms of politics that fill the macro rational spaces that have been left open by even NGO groups.

These examples also illustrate how conducting these operations without due regard for the nuances between aiming for policy action, and aiming for the sustainable realisation of particular interest can pose problems for NGO effectiveness in policy arenas.

Conclusion

At conceptual levels, a synergistic approach to policy dilemmas involving competing actors, that are all aiming to fulfill their own micro rational interests, does exist. In certain cases NGO groups fall prey to this same dynamic in their attempts to make policy processes more inclusive of unheard voices, while overlooking the potential for an approach that simultaneously hears all voices. This is unfortunate since it is unlikely that other groups, more heavily engaged with micro rational interests, will fill this space – at least not without being prompted.

If NGO groups are to prompt such action, it will likely come as the result of an articulation between policy discourse and the scale and scope of their actions within that discourse, relative to an ability to process large and complex interactions between social, economic, ecological, and political forces. Thus, it is doubtful whether an argument for multidisciplinary cooperation has ever been made as strongly, or relative to as important an issue as sustainable development.

Since NGOs have traditionally proven to be most adaptable to changes in the policy environments, it is perhaps likely that the next challenge - of evoking a shift of perspective toward the wood, for the benefit of the trees, will be characterised by refinements in the scale and scope of NGO activities, and greater attention to interdependence in highly porous political spaces.

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