

1 Introduction

They are wrong who think that politics is like an ocean voyager or a military campaign, something to be done with some end in view, something which levels off as soon as that end is reached. It is not a public chore to be got over with; it is a way of life.

—Plutarch

There is now widespread agreement that environmental issues represent enduring challenges to the way people everywhere live their lives. We now know, “in our bones,” as William Ophuls put it,¹ that we cannot continue using resources and producing wastes irrespective of the earth’s carrying capacity but rather must bring our social and productive activities more into line with the biological limits of the earth. Indeed, almost any indicator one chooses to look at tells essentially the same story: unless human beings alter their activities on a widespread scale, the quality of life on earth will be greatly compromised, if not fundamentally threatened, due to environmental degradation.

Developing and sustaining an environmentally sound course, however, is no easy matter, especially recognizing that environmental dangers are the cumulative effects of practices taking place in diverse settings, animated by multifarious factors. Moreover, environmental protection is not the only aim of societies and thus must be balanced with other social goals, such as economic well-being, which, depending upon how one thinks about it, can conflict with environmentally sound measures. To reorient human activities on such a scale and order of complexity entails employing means of governance that can actually influence vast and diverse numbers of people. It requires finding ways to constrain and direct activities, in a feasible manner, away from environmentally harmful practices and toward more environmentally sound ones. To put it in ordinary language, environmental concern fundamentally involves politics.

Over the past few decades, national governments, public and private research institutions, and corporations have become involved in environmental politics. They have all worked, in one capacity or another, to shape widespread human behavior with regard to environmental issues. Over this same period of time, a host of citizen-organized activist groups have arisen—or greatly expanded their size and scope—with the aim of protecting the earth. While data are sketchy, it is estimated that presently there are over 100,000 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working, in some capacity, for environmental protection, and a majority of these are activist groups.² Perhaps more impressive than numbers, the scope and power of environmental activist organizations has dramatically increased. In recent years, a number of groups have become transnational. They are organized across state boundaries and work toward environmental protection at the global level. The budgets of the largest of these groups are greater than the amounts most countries spend on environmental issues and at least double what the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) spends annually for its work.³ Furthermore, membership in these organizations has grown over the last two decades to a point where millions of people are currently members of transnational environmental groups.⁴ The best known of these organizations include Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth (FOE), the Chipko Movement, Conservation International, and World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

This book is about transnational environmental activist groups. It describes and analyzes the strategies they employ to shape widespread behavior or, put differently, their politics. Despite the increasing presence of environmental activist groups in world environmental affairs, few studies exist that try to understand what, in fact, these organizations are doing.⁵ This is unfortunate because as I hope to show transnational environmental activists are fashioning a type of politics that, while not an answer to contemporary environmental problems, greatly contributes to global environmental protection. In what follows, I bring this type of political practice into sharp relief and explore its meaning for both environmental affairs and the study of international relations. For reasons to be explained, I refer to this practice as world civic politics.

When most of us think about environmental politics, we tend to focus on nation-states. States are the main actors in world affairs and thus represent the primary mechanisms for addressing issues such as ozone depletion, global warming, and threats to biological

diversity. It makes sense, then, to see transnational environmental activists foremost as pressure groups that try to persuade governments to work for environmental well-being. Activists, from this perspective, lobby government officials in diverse countries and try to influence state officials at international conferences and other forums to support environmental protection measures. Such a view would not be far off the mark. Transnational activists devote tremendous effort toward lobbying, and this has been crucial to advancing international environmental law and practice. Such effort has been formidable in, for example, strengthening the London Dumping Convention,⁶ establishing an international ban on elephant ivory trading,⁷ and enforcing the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).⁸

The point of departure for this book is that the governmental dimension of world politics, and thus the lobbying efforts of transnational environmental activist groups, represent only one element of world political activity and a focus on them exclusively constitutes an incomplete approach to and understanding of environmental protection. To be sure, nation-states are essential in addressing environmental issues and activist efforts to pressure them are significant in world environmental affairs. Additionally, however, there are other arenas for organizing and carrying out efforts that are separate from the realm of government. These other arenas can be found in what has been called global civil society,⁹ and the attempt to use them for environmental protection purposes is a form of world civic politics. Transnational environmental groups practice world civic politics in addition to lobbying, and their work along these lines has become an important component of environmental politics more generally.

Public activity both within countries and beyond their borders is not completely organized by the institution of the state. The state's military, police, legal, administrative, and productive organs penetrate only certain domains of collective experience. Other spheres not only exist but greatly influence the character of public life. The most obvious is the economic realm insofar as it is independent of the state. Market forces, both domestically and internationally, shape the way vast numbers of people act in reference to issues of public concern and involvement. Additional mechanisms exist throughout and across societies in the form of social and cultural networks that structure collective behavior. Voluntary associ-

ations affiliated with science, trade, cultural expression, religion, and production influence widespread practices.

The underlying character of these nonstate arenas is that they take place in the civil dimension of world collective life. Civil society is understood to be that arena of social engagement existing above the individual yet below the state.¹⁰ It is a complex network of economic, cultural, and social practices based on friendship, custom, the market, and voluntary affiliation.¹¹ Although the concept arose in the analysis of domestic societies, it is beginning to make sense on a global level.¹² 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, form of global civil society. Global civil society, as such, is that slice of associational life that exists above the individual and below the state, but also across national boundaries.

Like its domestic counterpart, global civil society consists of structures that define and shape public affairs. When people organize themselves across state boundaries they create institutional and ideational structures which lend predictability to their collective endeavors and partially shape wider patterns of transnational social practice. For environmental activists, this does not happen simply as a matter of course, but can be deliberately fashioned to further particular ends; actors can intentionally participate in the formation and manipulation of global civil society. The politicization of global civil society involves turning the realms of transnational social, cultural, and economic life into levers of power that can be used to affect 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 myriad 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 affect change.¹³ 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. The French antinuclear movement, the early years of the German Green Party, and the feminist movement in the United Kingdom represent significant attempts to politicize various arenas to bring about change.¹⁴ Likewise, present day grassroots organizations—from new populism in the United States to Christian-based communities in Latin America

to alternative development organizations in India—are all targeting their governments and nurturing modes of political expression outside state control.¹⁵ Finally, the early years of Solidarity in Poland and Charter 77 in former Czechoslovakia illustrate the multifaceted character of activist politics. Recognizing the limits of influencing their respective states directly, Solidarity and Charter 77 created and utilized horizontal, societal associations involving church activities, savings associations, literary ventures, and the like to help order public life and bring about widespread changes.¹⁶ In each case, actors do not ignore the state but rather make a strategic decision to explore the political potential of unofficial realms of collective action. In each instance, groups target governmental officials when appropriate and when it appears efficacious. When this route of political expression fails or proves too dangerous, they seek other means of affecting widespread conditions and practices.

Moved up a political notch, this form of politics helps explain the efforts of transnational environmental groups. Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, Earth Island Institute, and so forth target governments and try to change state behavior to further their aims. In fact, this type of activity consumes a tremendous amount of their efforts. When this route fails or proves less efficacious, however, they work through transnational economic, social, and cultural networks to achieve their ends. In this capacity they practice world civic politics.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND POLITICS

Contemporary understandings of civil society stem largely from Hegel and to a lesser extent Tocqueville. Hegel's main contribution is to define civil society in contrast to the state. For Hegel, civil society is a sphere or "moment" of political order wherein free association takes place between individuals. It is an arena of particular needs, private interests, and divisiveness but within which citizens can come together to realize joint aims.¹⁷ Building upon Hegel's view, many contemporary theorists also understand civil society in contrast to the state. Civil society is the arena beyond the individual in which people engage in spontaneous, customary, and nonlegalistic forms of association with the intention of, as Tocqueville put it, pursuing "great aims in common."¹⁸ The state, on the other hand, is a complex network of governmental institutions—including the

military, bureaucracy, and executive offices—that constitute a legal or constitutional order. This order is animated by formal, official authority and aims to administer and control a given territory.¹⁹

The distinction between the state and civil society is crucial for developing a first-cut understanding of world civic politics. Analytically, the two realms circumscribe different types of activity and, when transnational environmental activists politicize global civil society, they are not engaged in directly manipulating or targeting formal, official offices. It is important to recognize, however, that civil society is not wholly autonomous or completely separate from the activities of states. As Gramsci and others have argued, state rule often permeates throughout 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.²⁰ Moreover, even in societies that are not so saturated by the presence of the state—in which a robust civil society is thought to exist independent of the state—it is inaccurate to assume a sharp distinction. The boundaries of the state are always ill-defined and essentially amorphous, leaking into and overlapping with civil society itself.²¹

Following this line of thought, the elusive, porous and mobile boundaries between the state and civil society make clear that when actions take place in one realm—although they have a distinct quality of efficacy about them—they have consequences for the other realm.²² The same is true at the global level. Global civil society does not exist in a vacuum but operates alongside of and constantly interacts with the state system. The actions of the states greatly structure the content and significance of economic, social, and cultural practices throughout the world; and these same practices, in turn, shape the character of state action. World civic politics, then, is not a practice that is immune from and unconcerned with state activity. Overlaps exist and, as will be shown, they are important to strategies of particular transnational environmental groups.²³

Having said this, it is absolutely essential to emphasize that it is not the entanglements and overlaps with states and the state system that make efforts undertaken in global civil society “political.” Just because overlaps exist does not mean that they are the *raison d’être* of politics; transnational activism does not simply become politically relevant when it intersects with state behavior. Rather, its political character consists in the ability to use the cultural,

social, and economic networks of the world 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 the character of politics itself.

There is a tendency in the study of international relations to see politics as a practice associated solely with national governments. There are good historical and intellectual reasons for this. Since roughly the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, states have emerged that hold a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence within given territories and constitute legal and constitutional orders. The state, as such, has become the primary institution capable of commanding widespread authority and thus able to direct large-scale human activity. Many scholars have, understandably, abstracted from the powerful presence of the state to conceive of this capability as the essence of politics itself. Politics, for them, consists in the practice of governance that is national in character and operative through the means of law or, more specifically, law backed by force. To use Lasswell's often-quoted definition, politics is about who gets what, when and how; and many see national governments as the sole authoritative mechanism that makes these decisions.

While governments are the main authoritative political institutions, politics as an activity or politically relevant behavior itself is not exhausted by them. In its broadest sense, politics has to do with the interface of power and what Cicero called, *res publica*, the public thing or public domain.²⁴ That is, politics is the employment of means to order, direct, and manage human behavior in matters of common concern and involvement. National governments, to be sure, are specific actors involved in politics. They are material entities with bureaucracies, personnel, equipment, and budgets that aim to govern affairs. They do not, however, monopolize the practice itself.

The idea of world civic politics signifies that embedded in the activities of transnational environmental groups is an understanding that states do not hold a monopoly over the instruments that govern human affairs but rather that nonstate forms of governance exist and can be used to effect widespread change.²⁵ To the extent that activists are successful at translating this understanding into an effective strategy of change—something to be demonstrated in the following pages—one must develop greater appreciation for a civic notion of governance and politics in a global context.

WORLD CIVIC POLITICS AND GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

The practice of world civic politics not only raises questions about conventional understandings of politics but also introduces a fundamentally different approach to global environmental governance. As mentioned, most students of international relations—and, by extension, students of international environmental politics—privilege the state in their analyses. In the context of global environmental governance, this consists of a view that could be called *statism*. Statism is the position that environmental problems can best be addressed by existing nation-states under the rubric of the contemporary state system. States, as the main actors in international affairs, are the primary mechanisms able to reach into and influence the lives of vast numbers of people and, as such, represent *the* entity for undertaking environmental protection. (To be sure, nongovernmental organizations play a role in international politics, according to statist, but, as mentioned, do so by influencing states.) Statists point to agreements such as CITES and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer as instances of successful multilateral accords and use them as models to argue that states, themselves, can and will address transboundary and global environmental problems.

Notwithstanding a respectable record of international cooperation on environmental issues, a sizeable number of scholars express disappointment with the ability of states to address successfully environmental dangers. For these thinkers, states will never be able to secure environmental well-being as long as they operate in the context of the state system. Rather, promising environmental action will only come about in a reformed world order—where the size, scope, and character of existing states are radically changed. For these thinkers, international regimes like CITES and so forth are mere window dressing for problems that require greater coordination between states than is possible in the present system and that, at times, defy state capabilities altogether. While a diverse group, there are essentially two schools of thought promoting a radical restructuring of the state system: supra-statism and sub-statism.²⁶

Supra-statism maintains that the problematic character of the state system can only be overcome by creating a world government to generate, legislate, and enforce environmental regulations. Supra-statists argue that the mismatch between the unitary character of

environmental issues and the fragmentary structure of the state system will always lead to insufficient environmental protection as states undertake inadequate domestic measures, negotiate weak accords, or capriciously comply with international mandates when this best serves their interests. A world government, according to supra-statists, would transcend the narrow aspirations of independent states and protect the entire earth by enacting consistent and comprehensive environmental measures worldwide.

Sub-statists, on the other hand, also feel the state system is at the core of environmental degradation but argue for a different type of remedy. Instead of building a supra-state to address environmental issues, this second school of thought calls for breaking up existing ones. For sub-statists, environmental dilemmas arise because of the increasing scale of human organization and practices throughout the world. Large-scale enterprises necessitate concentrating power which involves using technologies and pursuing forms of economic activity that are insensitive to local and regional dimensions of environmental issues. What is needed, according to sub-statism, is to decentralize power and fashion governing units that correspond and are responsive to on-the-ground practices that damage the environment. In one formulation, governing units would coincide with natural bioregions, which constitute semicontained ecosystems that have their own ecological imperatives.

While supra-statism and sub-statism present themselves as radical perspectives on global environmental governance, it is curious that, analytically, they do not represent fundamental departures from statism. All three emphasize that the institutional make-up of world affairs is central to environmental protection; all three approaches see the institution of the modern state playing a pivotal role as either the only route to effective environmental protection or the foil against which alternative routes must be explored. All three end up, in other words, reifying the governmental dimension of politics and thereby discounting other avenues for addressing environmental dangers. This is unfortunate because such a focus unduly constrains environmental political thought and action.

World civic politics does not privilege the state and is thus fundamentally different from statism, supra-statism, and sub-statism. The state is the central, but by no means the only, fact of global political life. World civic politics works underneath, above, and around the state to bring about widespread change. Its approach to global environmental governance rests on the view that the state

system alone cannot solve our environmental woes nor will substituting it with some other institutional form do the trick. The dynamics of environmental harm exceed the workings of the state system and thus relying solely on it or proposing alternative arrangements in its place are incomplete enterprises. Additionally, political effort must enlist nonstate mechanisms which operate in tandem with state activities and at the level, but not of the instrumental quality, of supra-statism and sub-statism. That is, environmental politics must work above, below, and at the level of interstate relations to advance environmental protection but do so in ways that do not simply focus on the governmental dimension available or proposed at each level of political activity. World civic politics, then, augments a governmental approach to politics and, as such, complements the politics of the state system and enlarges the political imagination as it reflects upon global environmental governance.²⁷

NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND THE STUDY OF WORLD POLITICS

While this book analyzes the politics of transnational environmental activist groups, at a higher level of abstraction it seeks to shift the terms of debate among students of international relations regarding the role of nongovernmental organizations. For decades, scholars have assumed that the conception and meaning of NGOs has been settled. NGOs, according to this assumption, are best understood as transnational pressure groups which gain political relevance to the degree they influence state action. That is, NGOs matter in world politics to the extent that they change states' policies or create conditions in the international system that enhance or diminish interstate cooperation. As a result, most studies of NGOs aim to demonstrate and measure NGO influence on state behavior.²⁸

The premise of this book is that the conception and meaning of NGOs in world affairs is not settled and will remain problematic as long as scholars remain focused on the relations between NGOs and the state, and ignore the civic dimension of NGO efforts. NGO activities within and across societies are a proper object of study and only by including them can one render an accurate understanding of NGOs and, by extension, world politics. By highlighting the world

civic politics practiced by transnational environmental activists—a subset of NGOs—this book assumes a critical stance toward contemporary NGO research and, to the degree the book's conclusions are persuasive, calls for recasting the role of NGOs in world affairs.

Sustained debate about NGOs began in the 1960s and early 1970s. At the time, many scholars argued that nonstate actors were growing in number and power and, as a consequence, students of world politics would be better served paying attention to NGOs as well as, if not instead of, nation-states. For example, a substantial number of multinational corporations (MNCs) had assets that exceeded the gross national product (GNP) of certain states and had projects taking place in a host of countries;²⁹ as a result, many scholars claimed that MNCs were curtailing state action and represented an independent variable for explaining world events.³⁰ Likewise, advances in communication technology were allowing 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 across the globe. Scholars argued that they were having a significant impact on questions of peace, international morality, and the salience of political issues.³¹ In short, the surge in transnational activity suggested that the state might not be the most important variable to study when trying to understand world events.³²

The debate over the relative importance of the state in world affairs had an impact in the field insofar as it convinced political realists—those who most explicitly privileged the state in the 1960s and 1970s—that NGOs matter.³³ To be sure, this took some effort. Defenders of the strictly state-centric model argued, for example, that the proliferation of NGOs was a function of hegemonic stability and thus derivative of interstate behavior.³⁴ Others claimed that transnationalism was not increasing interdependence between states, and hence restricting states' ability to control events, but that the amount of interdependence had actually been decreasing compared to earlier times.³⁵ Furthermore, many claimed that while the number of nonstate actors was rising significantly, NGOs were not involved in the most consequential world events at the time. Compared to nation-states, nonstate actors were marginal in political importance.³⁶ Notwithstanding these arguments, by the 1980s,

NGOs had won significance and scholars began to take them seriously. They became a legitimate object of study.

The debate about NGOs, while important, suffered premature closure. This is because scholars saw NGO significance, ultimately, in terms of state power. That is, in most subsequent studies NGOs gained prominence only to the degree that they affected state policies; their influence on world affairs apart from this role was neglected.³⁷ One of the reasons for this is that the debate itself was formulated in a way that could only have had this result. Scholars saw the controversy as a "unit of analysis" problem. They argued over which variable should be the proper object of research in world politics. Should one study, for instance, MNCs, the state, revolutionary groups or transnational political parties to understand world affairs? Stated as such, 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.³⁸ 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.³⁹

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 third debate's origins lie in the questioning of the state-centric model of the 1970s and 1980s but it has since expanded to include epistemological, ontological, and axiological concerns.⁴⁰ 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 micro-processes on macro-phenomena.⁴¹ Walker's insights concerning the critical component of social movements⁴² and Falk's understanding of the anti-statist logic of activist groups.⁴³ My work uses 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.⁴¹

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 did not affect world affairs in their own right.⁴⁴ Current research can fall into this same trap if not understood to be part of a more fundamental type of examination.

This book 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 articulating NGO activity which 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 of these organizations itself 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 or, put differently, engaging in world civic politics.

PRESENTATION OF THE ARGUMENT

This book is organized along the following lines. Having introduced the theoretical argument, the next chapter justifies the reason activists work in the civic dimension of collective life and sets up an analytical framework for understanding how they do so. It begins by examining and then critically assessing the way the contemporary state system addresses environmental issues. This includes a review

of state activities at the domestic, international, and global levels, and theoretical and empirical accounts of why such efforts, while essential, are insufficient. The chapter goes on to describe and critically analyze the two most prominent conceptual alternatives to the state system: supra-statism and sub-statism. These schools of thought are placed in the context of international relations scholarship more generally and analyzed regarding the contribution they can make to global environmental protection. The chapter argues that, although they offer valuable insights—insights around which activists organize their efforts and thus significant for the overall argument of the book—ultimately, they place too much emphasis on the governmental dimension of politics and neglect other arenas for global environmental political action. Each sees the institution of the modern state and the system within which it is situated as the central facts of world environmental politics. This greatly biases thinking and acting with reference to environmental politics. The chapter concludes by introducing transnational environmental activist groups and making a preliminary case for turning to them to learn about nonstate forms of world environmental politics.

In the following three chapters, I present case studies of the way Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, and World Wildlife Fund, respectively, undertake their efforts. These chapters aim to explicate the nature of world civic politics by depicting the world civic dimension of each of these group's activities. Each chapter consists of two parts. The first is an empirical discussion which outlines the origins, organizational structure, and political strategies of a single group. This introduces readers to the organization under consideration and describes the nonstatist dimension of its politics. The second part interprets this dimension in the context of world politics more generally. This latter discussion is more theoretical and explains the genuine political character of activists' nonstate-oriented efforts. It aims to speak to the question of accurately conceptualizing world politics.

The first group I study is Greenpeace. While Greenpeace engages in numerous political activities, I pay particular attention to the way it disseminates an ecological sensibility. Greenpeace's work entails persuading all types of people to care about environmental conditions and to take actions to protect the earth. To do this, Greenpeace targets the global cultural realm. It clues into internationally shared modes of discourse, such as moral norms, symbols, and scientific argument, and it manipulates them to induce people to pursue, what Greenpeace assumes are, environ-

mentally sound practices. My aim is to convince the reader that this is a significant form of world politics even though it is not a matter of state activity.

The second group I study is World Wildlife Fund. Among its many activities, World Wildlife Fund devotes much effort to actual environmental restoration and protection. World Wildlife Fund works in environmentally stressed regions and engages local residents in programs of environmental renewal. Its intention is to empower local people so they can maintain the environmental integrity of their own environments. This is part of a broader strategy of strengthening civil societies throughout the world. My aim in this chapter is to demonstrate that actual local environmental-rescue work is a significant form of world politics.

The last group I examine is Friends of the Earth. Among its many activities, Friends of the Earth works directly at the interface between states and global civil society. States are enmeshed in networks of economic, social, and cultural processes that are not derivative of interstate relations. Friends of the Earth focuses on these processes and alters them so they will reflect a concern for the global environment. To the degree that governments interact with these processes, they become more accountable to environmental protection. What is key to recognize in this chapter is that while Friends of the Earth directs its efforts, in large part, to the activities of states, again, the emphasis is on politicizing global civil society. My intention is to persuade the reader that this is a genuinely important form of world politics even though the dynamics at work are not statist in nature.

After presenting the case studies, I return to the issue of worldwide forms of governance. Using the empirical and interpretive material presented in previous chapters, I argue in theoretical terms for the efficacy of world civic politics. Elaborating on the nature of disseminating an ecological sensibility, empowering local residents, and manipulating the interdependencies of world affairs, I emphasize how these nonstatist mechanisms actually alter the way people around the globe live their lives. In this last chapter, I describe in detail the notion of world civic politics and reflect upon its meaning for scholarship in international relations. I conclude that, when scholars duly appreciate the element of governance inherent in world civic politics, they are better able to understand the nature of world politics itself.

Before proceeding, it is necessary to make three caveats regarding this study. First, although I refer to transnational environmental

activist groups in general, this work focuses predominantly on northern organizations. Greenpeace, World Wildlife Fund, and Friends of the Earth originated and maintain central headquarters in the developed world.⁴⁵ By focusing on these organizations, then, I am assuming that an understanding of northern organizations will shed light upon all transnational groups. This premise may, of course, turn out to be false.⁴⁶

Second, although this book examines transnational environmental groups, it does not suggest that such organizations have a monopoly on ecological wisdom, are the harbingers of an environmentally sound future, or stand beyond justifiable criticism. Activists, like all political actors, have their own problems. Important questions need to be asked, for example, about their use, and at times misuse, of scientific evidence; their accountability (they are not elected officials); and the often antagonistic relations between groups. I do not address these dimensions of activist groups in great detail in the book, although in quite a few places I refer to points of contestation about particular issues. I do this 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.

Finally, although I present a sympathetic reading of activist groups, I do not believe they represent an answer to global environmental problems. Indeed, there is no answer *per se*. There is a long history of anthropogenic environmental abuse; living on the earth in ways that do not disrupt its ecological integrity has always been—and seemingly will always be—an unending challenge.⁴⁷ Part of the reason for this is that environmental issues are not puzzles in search of solutions but rather perennial challenges that successive generations must persistently confront anew. These challenges involve constantly searching for more sensitive and sustainable ways of interacting with the natural environment not discovering some single answer to environmental protection. Transnational environmental groups are very much a part of that search, and one can learn much by studying their politics. One cannot look to activists, however, for a so-called solution to humanity's environmental woes.