1

Introduction

The organization Friends of the Earth bought our tickets to Washington, D.C. The occasion was the mobilization for the celebration of the fifty years of the multilateral financing institutions and the climax of the international campaign against them, known as "Fifty Years is Enough!" We went there to denounce irregularities with the World Bank–funded Planafloro project in Rondônia. I went, together with Luisinho, the executive secretariat for the NGOs' Forum of Rondônia, and Almir, a Surui Indian. We were to meet the representatives of Friends of the Earth and Oxfam. We lived the biggest adventure of our lives! Nobody was waiting for us in the Washington, D.C., airport. We managed to find the buildings where the meetings were happening, but I do not know how, since the only thing Luisinho could say in English was to ask if anybody spoke either Portuguese or Spanish. . . . When we arrived at the convention area, there were dozens of meetings happening at the same time, in a gigantic convention center. It was a madhouse in there! We were totally lost. We kept walking up and down the corridors and security was starting to ask us questions since we were the only different people around—we were wearing T-shirts that demanded the creation of extractive reserves and Almir was wearing a traditional headband decorated with colorful feathers. It was then that Patricia, from Oxfam, showed up. With her help, everything became easier. She and Smeraldi, from Friends of the Earth, arranged meetings between us and World Bank executive directors, and we were able to gain the support of a group of directors for the cause of protecting Amazonia's environment. (José Maria dos Santos, president of the Organization of Rondonian Rubber Tappers)[1]

The successful epilogue of the "adventure" of the president of the Organization of Rondonian Rubber Tappers (OSR) illustrates the strategies and processes of resource sharing that has characterized modern environmental politics. This type of politics is one example of the new trends in global environmental governance[2]

1

whose understanding has challenged traditional concepts and frameworks of analysis. State-centric perspectives, for instance, even when conceived in terms of interstate cooperation or regimes, have limited explanatory power to assess environmental management initiatives fostered by non-state actors, such as those attempted by the Organization of Rondonian Rubber Tappers, Friends of the Earth, and others.

Fortunately, since the 1990s, approaches to global environmental governance have broadened the scope of analysis to account both for non-state actors involved in environmental politics and for the transnational nature of environmental issues. These approaches have gone beyond the analysis of processes at the level of the nation-state, and looked both "downward," toward forces operating inside states, and "upward," toward the international system and the actors active in it—multilateral organizations, international corporations, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and social movements, and the global civil society.

The study of transnational environmental advocacy networks is particularly relevant precisely because the objects of analysis (the networks themselves) operate, simultaneously, at the local, national, and international levels. In addition, they have been responsible for many of the victories of the global environmental movement to date.[3]

The term *transnational advocacy network* has been common currency in international and comparative politics since the publication of the widely acclaimed and award-winning book *Activists Beyond Borders,* by Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink. In it Keck and Sikkink define transnational advocacy networks as networks of "relevant actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchange of information and services."[4] Of particular conceptual significance is the authors' justification for choosing "network" over coalition or movement. The choice was determined by the objects of study themselves, namely, individuals and organizations that participate in such initiatives.[5] Be that as it may, the concept of networks has a long tradition both in sociology and social movements theory as well as in international relations. Transnational advocacy networks' organizational flexibility, capacity to produce and disseminate information, and ability to operate across national borders are important assets in international environmental politics.

The literature on transnational advocacy networks evaluates their impact on global environmental management by focusing on two different arenas. On the one hand are the studies that assess impact on the nation-state and on International Governmental Organizations (IGOs). Some authors, for instance, look at the role that networks play in lobbying governmental officials toward the formulation of environmental treaties and domestic policies, and the creation of environmentally related international lines of credit.[6] Others

investigate how transnational advocacy networks have affected reform processes within IGOs leading to the formulation of social and environmental guidelines and safeguards procedures.[7]

The other arena of impact of transnational advocacy networks that existing literature addresses are larger collectivities throughout the world (or entities that participate in world civic politics).[8] In this case, analyses focus on the capacity of transnational advocacy networks to influence international public opinion or the electorate in a given country, and on their role in "translating" the different social meanings of particular struggles (for environmental preservation and indigenous rights, for instance) to stakeholders at different levels: local, national, and international.

Whether evaluating transnational environmental advocacy networks in terms of their impact on states and IGOs or on world civic politics, available literature perceives such networks as a constant. A network's strategies, the sociopolitical and economic contexts in which it operates, and the alliances it builds are variables that affect its capacity to influence its "targets." In this book, I propose a third avenue for the evaluation of the impacts of transnational environmental advocacy networks: the investigation of their impact on the level of empowerment of networks' local members, and as a consequence, on local politics. To achieve this goal, one must open the "black box" and look at transnational networks from the inside out. In this sense, the effectiveness of transnational advocacy networks is very much—although not exclusively— a function of their own internal dynamics, such as their internal politics, resources management, and degrees of cohesion and legitimacy.

When looking at such networks from the inside out, one confronts—and questions—two existing assumptions. The first is an obvious one: that participation in transnational advocacy networks empowers local network members.[9] Studies have claimed, for instance, that alliances and coalitions with international human rights and environmental groups have given "voice" and visibility to local grassroots groups, such as indigenous peoples or *campesino* associations, in national and international arenas. As a consequence, these groups' leverage vis-à-vis opposing forces has increased. A second and related assumption in the literature on transnational advocacy networks is that international and domestic non-governmental organizations play the determinant role in a network's effectiveness.[10] Among all network members (local grassroots groups, individual activists, concerned media), international NGOs, and to a lesser extent their domestic counterparts, possess most of a network's resources and are the ones who make them available to less resourceful network members. Their extraordinary institutional flexibility provides crucial mediation between "levels" or arenas of action.

Without disregarding the role of international and domestic NGOs, I argue that the effectiveness of a transnational environmental advocacy network

depends, primarily, on the role that local member organizations play in determining the network's goals and strategies. This discussion is futile unless one determines what counts as "effectiveness." Essentially, effectiveness is a function of goals. If the goal of a transnational environmental advocacy network is to change the behavior of states and international organizations, effectiveness means changing such behaviors. If the goal of a network is to engage the world in civic (environmental) politics, then a high degree of engagement determines effectiveness. There are other, more limited, "measures" of effectiveness. Transnational advocacy networks have been relatively effective in making the World Bank more publicly accountable, and have been successful avenues through which civil society groups can influence a powerful development agency.[11] Yet, none of these "measures" of effectiveness address what I consider the ultimate goal of environmental protection initiatives: the protection of the local environment.[12]

In this book, a transnational environmental advocacy network is effective if and when its members succeed in devising and implementing measures that promote local environmental preservation. These processes are heavily dependent upon the nature of a network's local membership base.[13] In turn, the nature of a network's local membership base is shaped by various processes of "localizing" transnational activism. These mechanisms may or may not lead to the empowerment of local network members. Rather than being an inevitable outcome, as it is widely assumed, the notion that local groups are empowered by participating in transnational advocacy networks requires qualification. Important steps in this process are to define empowerment in specific (local) contexts and to distinguish between political and technical empowerment (while remaining mindful of the relations between the two processes).

For the purposes of the analysis presented in this book, local political empowerment is a function of the establishment of institutionalized mechanisms for local groups' participation in environmental and development policymaking (such as an NGOs' forum or umbrella organization, or the election of groups' representatives to local or national decision-making arenas). It is also a function of their capacity to formulate a common local agenda of priority issues related to environmental protection and development, which implies reaching some level of consensus among different groups affected by a given policy or initiative. Finally, political empowerment is a function of the consolidation of local groups' autonomy vis-à-vis their own national and international network partners as well as in relation to other local political forces (the state and local economic elites, for instance). Because I am particularly interested in transnational environmental advocacy networks, local political empowerment correlates to the technical capacity of local members of a transnational environmental advocacy network to promote environmentally sustainable development. Technical

empowerment is thus a function of local groups' capacity to mobilize financial resources to attract (and retain) competent cadres and to make their work operational (access to domestic and international traveling, and to information technology infrastructure, for instance), to provide technical training on environmental and participatory issues to new and existing personnel, and to develop permanent mechanisms for information production and information sharing with other network members, their rank and file, governmental agencies, and the media.

By qualifying the potential role of transnational advocacy networks in empowering their local members I avoid the dangers of a circular argument (the effectiveness of environmental advocacy networks is a function of their local membership base, who is empowered by the network). In fact, while there have been many instances in which participation in transnational advocacy networks has contributed to the political empowerment of local groups in the short term, the absence of a corresponding level of technical and material empowerment has undermined these groups' political position in the long term. There is a perverse irony in the fact that, in many instances, transnational advocacy networks create conditions for the political empowerment of local civil society groups, only to see these groups lose ground under the technical and material burden of their own success.

The relationship between the performance (or effectiveness) of transnational advocacy networks and the level and nature of activism of their local membership base is still an underexplored area of research. Improved knowledge on such a relationship may contribute to a better understanding of the links between global and local civil societies, and on how institutions and processes established in one arena affect dynamics in the other.

TRANSNATIONAL ADVOCACY NETWORKS, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT: DEFINING CONCEPTS

The study of initiatives that have bound together actors of different natures who operate at several levels (local, national, and international) has picked up speed since the late 1980s. The fall of the Berlin Wall symbolized the end of a bipolar world and consolidated trends toward interdependence and cooperation in the international system. These trends did not affect nation-states alone. In fact, they became increasingly evident in the dealings of non-state actors such as private corporations, multilateral agencies, and non-governmental organizations of various kinds (churches, trade associations, environmental and human rights organizations, among others).[14] Over time, transnational advocacy networks have become one of the most active sets of actors in certain areas of international politics, such as human rights, the environment,

health, and women's issues.[15] While I have defined transnational advocacy networks above, there are still some conceptual components of the definition that merit clarification.

The standard sociological concept of network refers to relations established among individuals to influence and constrain behavior on a certain issue or set of issues.[16] Usually, network members exhibit intellectual and emotional commitment to the issues at stake and share knowledge about them.[17] While expert knowledge and emotional commitment might explain why certain actors participate in an activist network,[18] I argue that they are insufficient to explain network participation by all types of actors. When it comes to understanding the participation of grassroots groups in transnational environmental advocacy networks, for instance, the notion of material interests has to be brought into the explanation. That is not to say that rural workers' associations, peasant cooperatives, and indigenous groups do not operate on principle or do not hold important knowledge on environmental issues. The point is that since they tend to be directly affected by changes in the local environment, they have a material interest in preserving their way of life and/or pursuing the betterment of their quality of life through environmental preservation.[19]

In the particular case of transnational environmental advocacy networks, I suggest that both ideal and material interests concur to explain the behavior of network members. They also help clarify conceptual differences among them. Transnational environmental networks are composed, primarily, of nongovernmental organizations.[20] There are, however, myriad definitions of NGOs. For some, they are "self-governing, private, not for profit organizations that are geared toward improving the quality of life of disadvantaged people."[21] For others, NGOs and interest groups are interchangeable terms, both defined as "private (i.e., nongovernmental) bodies organized for the purpose of directly or indirectly influencing public policy either on behalf of their members or on behalf of what they perceive to be the broader public interest."[22] Although these definitions are not contradictory, they emphasize very different aspects of what constitutes an NGO. In the first definition, NGOs are about improving the quality of life of sectors of the population, and we may assume that churches, and social assistance and self-help groups exhaust the categories in the concept. In the second definition the emphasis is on the political role of NGOs, and the fact that the term is equated to interest groups implies the inclusion of a broader range of private advocacy organizations (maybe even business associations and lobby groups).

The "overinclusiveness" of NGO definitions is detrimental to an accurate understanding of the composition and nature of activism in transnational environmental advocacy networks. In this book, I conceive NGOs (local, domestic, or international) as a different set of actors from grassroots groups.

NGOs are thus research or advocacy organizations that may provide support to grassroots groups at material and strategic levels but are not identified by the rank and file of such groups as co-participants in their political and material struggles. Several characteristics separate NGOs from grassroots groups: NGOs are usually professionally organized and have headquarters, communication resources, and permanent staff. They have specific mandates defined in statutes and cannot easily depart from them if, for instance, the objectives of a campaign in which they are involved suddenly change. Principles and values usually determine the priorities in their statutes. Despite the support they may provide to grassroots groups, NGOs rarely have a mandate to represent such groups. Examples of NGOs that participate in the networks discussed in this book are the Washington, D.C.-based Environmental Defense (EDF), and the Brazilian Institute for Amazonian and Environmental Studies (IEA). In contrast, grassroots groups may or may not have formal headquarters and paid staff. They are often (but not always) informally organized, and their membership tends to be restricted to those directly affected by the issue that originated concern and mobilization. Grassroots representatives have a formal mandate to represent a given population or social group.[23] While some grassroots groups may have statutes, these do not predefine issues or priorities for activism. Activism is determined by the needs of constituencies, which often change over time. Examples of grassroots groups are the various Amerindian regional associations and national confederations in Brazil and Ecuador, and the Organization of Rondonian Rubber Tappers. An important commonality between NGOs and grassroots groups is the one highlighted in McCormick's definition: both are political actors who directly or indirectly attempt to influence policy and politics at local, national, and international levels.

If the members of transnational environmental advocacy networks are of different natures, it is fair to assume that they have different relative impacts on a network's performance. I concede that international, and to a lesser extent, domestic NGOs tend to be the primary sources of material and technical resources for a network, and often take the crucial responsibility of producing and disseminating information.[24] Yet it is a network's local membership base that bears the responsibility of guaranteeing (through either direct implementation or monitoring) the eventual success of the network regarding the protection of the local environment.

As I give particular attention to the role of local groups in transnational environmental advocacy networks it is impossible to avoid an analysis of what such groups represent to the local civil society. Distinctions between local, national, and global civil societies, however, were not common in the literature until recently. Assessments of the degree of civil society activism were traditionally limited to nations. Alexis de Tocqueville, for instance, praised the role of peoples' associations and volunteer groups as constituting the backbone of

American democracy. Others highlighted the role of authoritarian political regimes in hindering the emergence and/or consolidation of national civil societies in Latin America and other regions of the world.[25] Minimally, civil society is always defined in contrast to the state. But beyond the boundaries of the family and clan and short of the state there is a good deal to be found: markets, voluntary associations, churches, interest groups, labor unions, non-governmental organizations.[26]

This array of actors broadens even further when one releases the concept of civil society from its national confines. Such a process became inevitable in the last decades of the twentieth century due to the political, social, and economic trends that reshaped the world during that period. The expansion of free-market economy, the information technology revolution, and processes of political opening and democratization of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, have had direct effects in stimulating civil society organization at the local level, strengthening it at the national level,[27] and consolidating it at the global level. The very existence of transnational advocacy networks corroborates the notion that the phenomenon of a global civil society is real and is here to stay.[28] In fact, the globalization of information processes and technologies has been a crucial factor in the reorganization of power relationships at all levels of politics.[29] Social groups, traditionally marginalized by conventional (national) politics, have relied on information technology to project their plight and struggles beyond national borders. Thus, they have not only acquired allies and resources at the global level, but also transformed local demands into transnational ones. Identity-based movements, such as those of rubber tappers[30] and indigenous peoples,[31] have been particularly successful in using symbolic appeals and information campaigns as links between local and global activism.

In considering civil society at local, national, and international levels it is important to be mindful that "the concept of civil society does not make a smooth transition from the domestic to the international sphere if one expects them to have identical characteristics."[32] Thus, I must clarify what characteristics of civil society apply, equally, to all three levels. The first such characteristic is the diversity of groups and interests. The importance of transnational advocacy networks as a methodological tool is that they permit the identification of civil society groups that, despite their differences, obtain a certain degree of unity in pursuing a "common good." Other characteristics of civil society that transition well between levels of analysis include its being a space for the development of a community value system, and the fact that its functioning depends on association, communication, and information flows.[33] Finally, in an apparent but not actual contradiction to the two previous characteristics, civil society is an arena for conflict. At the local and national levels civil society is at odds with the state, attempting to assert its autonomy or

complete separation from it. At the global level, civil society confronts the interstate system and the global economy. In any case, the tensions between public and private realms do not prevent their interpenetration. In the end, the boundaries between state (or the interstate system) and civil society are elusive and porous and actions in one realm have consequences for the other.[34]

While I do not refer often to the "global civil society" in the book, it is important to clarify that my approach to transnational advocacy networks assumes the existence of a "slice of associational life that exists above the individual and below the state, but also across national boundaries."[35] I do refer often to "local civil society" and more specifically to "local civil society groups." The difference between these terms is particularly important for an accurate assessment of processes of empowerment. One can, albeit with difficulty, "measure" the level of empowerment of certain groups in society over time. It is much harder, however, to evaluate processes of empowerment of whole civil societies (local or otherwise).

Applied to the specific cases of this book, local political and technical empowerment directly correlates to the political and technical capacity of local members of a transnational environmental advocacy network to promote environmentally sustainable development. Specific indicators of this process derive directly from the definition of empowerment provided above. Thus, one must assess the extent to which local groups have achieved a position of legitimate interlocutors vis-à-vis the state and other political and economic elites who have privileged access to local environmental policymaking processes; the extent to which local groups have guaranteed their access to policymaking arenas through formal channels that do not depend on specific activists or enlightened politicians and have used such channels to effectively influence the design and implementation of policies; the extent to which local groups have access to information on public policy and capacity to disseminate it among their rank and file; and finally, the extent to which participation in transnational activism has contributed to an increase in local groups' material and technical resources at adequate levels to meet the demands of participating in the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of environmentally sustainable development policies.

At this point, the reader may legitimately ask: "Why, then, does one need to discuss the promotion of environmental sustainable development by transnational environmental advocacy networks rather than placing the investigation squarely within the realm of local participatory development?" Recent critical assessments of both the practice and the theory on development and environmental resources management provide the answer. Local empowerment and civil society organizations' capacities to affect environmental policy occur neither in a political vacuum nor in an isolated socioeconomic context. The tendency to romanticize the "local" has skewed analyses away from

acknowledging the inequalities and power relations inherent at that level, and from the broader national and transnational political and economic forces that affect local power imbalances.[36] Once again, the concept of transnational advocacy networks as a methodological tool, particularly when networks are investigated from the "inside out," sheds light on the interplay of power relations at various levels of analysis and on how these relations affect efforts to promote environmentally sustainable development.

Failure to elaborate on the tensions and cleavages that emerge among civil society groups, both locally and transnationally, may hinder the methodological relevance of transnational advocacy networks.[37] This is particularly true when one recognizes the need for activists to "negotiate over the terms of the story," or the "meaning" of their struggles and goals.[38] In the case of transnational environmental advocacy networks, the challenge of defining their struggles and goals is all the more complex due to the fuzziness of the concept of environmentally sustainable development.[39]

While the main "issue" binding together actors in the transnational advocacy networks discussed in this book is the promotion of environmentally sustainable development, not all network members approach this notion in identical ways. This should not be a surprise given that the term has been the object of debate in both academic and professional arenas, particularly since 1987, with the publication of the report *Our Common Future* by the World Commission on Environment and Development. The emphasis of the report was on the preservation of natural resources for future generations.[40] Such a broad definition had the somewhat positive effect of creating consensus among a wide array of actors. It played a role, for instance, in fostering a certain degree of unity among world leaders in the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), and in the formulation of guidelines for global action in areas such as biodiversity, water resources, and climate change. The major problem with that notion of sustainable development, however, was—and still is—its "fuzziness" or vagueness, and as a result, the difficulty in making it operational.[41]

A brief survey of the literature on environmentally sustainable development identifies at least three approaches to the concept. The first approach is less significant for the purposes of this book, since the environment is a secondary and implicit consideration in the larger context of "sustainable development." I will label this first approach "techno-economic." The other two approaches are labeled "mainstream" or "conservationist," and "socioenvironmental development."[42]

As its label indicates, techno-economic approaches to sustainable development rely on economic growth and technological advancements as key components of the process. In other words, "economic growth can create the capacity to alleviate poverty and solve environmental threats."[43] Such an

understanding has followed Norgaard's (1984) proposal of linking economic and ecological paradigms, whereby sustainable development would be a possible outcome of a "co-evolutionary" (and preferably parallel) improvement of both economic and environmental systems.[44] Not all definitions of sustainable development within the techno-economic approach rely exclusively on technology and economic growth for the achievement of environmental sustainability. Admittedly, they are the key tools for the implementation of sustainable development in poor societies, but have limits when it comes to ensure equity within and among generations.[45] One alternative is thus to introduce the notion of "long-term" in the economic analysis. The concept of natural capital stock[46] may be one tool in this process. It would help in attenuating the dichotomy between development and environmental preservation. Traditional economic principles prescribe that environmental degradation actually increases the economic value of the next unit of environment since scarcity raises prices. Poor countries in particular tend to compromise their future development and the well-being of future generations due to immediate pressures to speed up development at the cost of compromising their environment. If a "long-term" perspective becomes predominant in economic calculations, the value of conserving a nation's natural capital stock could increase.[47]

"Mainstream"[48] or "conservationist"[49] approaches to environmentally sustainable development are placed together here only for the sake of brevity. In fact, they represent the largest and most diverse group of definitions of the concept. What mainstream and conservationist approaches to (environmentally) sustainable development have in common is their rejection of technology and traditional economic growth as the primary solutions for problems of environmental degradation. Not all definitions within this approach, however, reject the emphasis on technology and economic growth with the same intensity. Most admit that the elimination of poverty (through these processes) is an essential condition for environmental protection. What characterizes mainstream and conservationist approaches to environmentally sustainable development is not only that, compared to techno-economic approaches, they underplay the role of technology and economic growth in the process, but also that they rely on other variables. In this sense, environmentally sustainable development is a process in which not only economic growth matters, but one in which the quality of growth is paramount. Quality of growth is dependent upon the control of population levels, the conservation and enhancement of the natural resources base, and the participation of all stakeholders in decisions regarding environmental preservation and sustainable development.[50]

Finally, socioenvironmental development approaches emphasize the ideals of equity, social justice, and political participation as inherent components of environmentally sustainable development.[51] One of the main assumptions of socioenvironmental development approaches is that "the way people

relate to their environment—as well as the way they understand it—is created by culture, and bounded by social relations, by structures of power and domination."[52] Hence, sustainability requires looking beyond the natural environment per se, and toward a political economy approach to environmental problems.[53] This is a significant departure from mainstream or conservationist approaches, which tend not to challenge existing social, economic, and political structures, but suggest reforms in the ways these structures affect the natural environment. Analyses of the environmental crisis from a socioenvironmental (or political economy) perspective are mindful of the need for poverty alleviation if environmental sustainability is to be achieved.[54] Yet, different from mainstream and techno-economic approaches to environmentally sustainable development, these analyses totally reject the notion that economic growth will eliminate poverty. On the contrary, economic growth is more likely to be a cause of increasing levels of socioeconomic and political inequalities.[55] Without a radical change of structures and processes that perpetuate socioeconomic and political inequalities, environmentally sustainable development cannot be achieved. It is interesting to notice that a socioenvironmental development approach to environmentally sustainable development seems to have left the more radical periphery of environmental analyses to become predominant among renowned students of environmental and development issues in Amazonia.[56]

As the stories in this book unfold, the reader will have the opportunity to observe how the different approaches to environmentally sustainable development influenced the actions of transnational environmental advocacy networks and of the different actors who participated in them.

KEY QUESTIONS

The main part of this book consists of a comparative study across time of a particular environmental advocacy network, the Rondônia network. The Rondônia network emerged in the early 1980s and mobilized environmental and human rights international NGOs, environmental activists and consultants for environmental and Amerindian issues both in Brazil and abroad, the specialized media, and concerned individuals in multilateral and governmental agencies. These individuals and organizations had in common their concern with the environmental consequences of development policies then under implementation in the Brazilian state of Rondônia, in western Amazonia. The analysis of the evolution of the Rondônia network over a period of twenty years (1980–2000) illuminates, in an unprecedented way, the challenges and opportunities confronting transnational environmental advocacy networks.

Theoretical and practical motives determined the selection of the Rondônia network over other possible choices. For reasons that shall be detailed in the following chapters, the Rondônia network generated, from its onset, high levels of interest among the global environmental and human rights communities, and at specific moments, among the general public as well. As a consequence, it has become a landmark of transnational environmental activism. In addition, its time span (twenty years) allows for conclusions that address structural, rather than circumstantial issues. Finally, research on the Rondônia network was made easier by my personal and professional contacts in Brazil and fluency in Portuguese. For comparative purposes, I also studied, in significantly lower levels of detail, transnational advocacy networks in Ecuador and India (see chapters 6 and 7). The selection of these networks followed the theoretical rationale presented above, namely, the fact that they generated significant levels of interest worldwide and eventually became landmarks for transnational social and environmental activism, and their long time span (beyond the scope of specific campaigns). To focus the analysis I resorted to several questions about the nature of transnational environmental advocacy networks and the impacts of their activism.

Who participates in a transnational advocacy
network and how do they participate?

At first glance, this is more an empirical than an analytical question. In truth, it is not. As one investigates the composition of a network he/she inevitably evaluates the relative weight of network members. Different political and material resources, differential access to political arenas, different sources of legitimacy, and different roles in decision-making processes affect relations among members of a network. These internal relations are determinant of a network's effectiveness. As this book unfolds, the reader will notice that local groups' membership in transnational environmental advocacy networks does not automatically guarantee their meaningful *participation* in them. Unless local groups devise or create avenues through which their priorities and "vision" are incorporated into a network's overarching goals, they risk becoming mere instruments of legitimation for international environmental activism.

At the onset of each chapter I list the organizations and groups of activists that were most active in the networks (noting when and if the relative weights of different players within each network change overtime). In doing so, I describe network members' characteristics, resources, and goals. As the chapters unfold, the reader will find answers to questions such as: How did network members negotiate the terms of their common struggle (the meaning and goals of their mobilization)? How did network members reach decisions about specific strategies? And what role did each member or group of

members play in this process? The internal political exchanges among network members may provide clues for an improved understanding of multilevel politics beyond that of specific transnational networks.

What are the strategies available to transnational advocacy networks?
When are they successful and why?

The study of strategies devised and implemented by a network as a whole and/or by some of its members at specific junctures constitutes an important part of the explanation for a network's successes and failures. This aspect of the analysis is of particular interest for practitioners and activists. Evidently, a given strategy, used to pursue a specific goal, in a given moment in time, is a historical experience that cannot be replicated. Yet, understanding the conditions in which a given strategy was more or less successful may provide valuable insights for ongoing and future struggles.

In evaluating the strategies used by the members of the networks discussed in this book, I looked for answers to the following questions: What were the objectives of specific strategies and how did they relate to both the overall goals of the network and to the specific agendas of particular members? Who were the key catalysts for such strategies within the network? Who were the primary targets of specific strategies and how did such targets react? The case studies will reveal the effectiveness of locally devised and locally implemented network strategies, despite the tendency of network members to privilege initiatives that unfolded in the international arena.

What are the consequences of transnational advocacy networks' activism?

This question goes to the core of the theoretical ambition of this book. The consequences of transnational advocacy networks must be evaluated in three different areas. First, there are the consequences for network members themselves. How did their experiences and involvement in a given network affect their material resource base, political alliances, legitimacy vis-à-vis their constituencies, and assessment or reevaluation of goals? How did the evolution of a network over time affect the balance of political forces among its members, and conversely, how did changes in this balance of forces impact a network's effectiveness? Many of the answers to these questions turned out to be counterintuitive. They provided a foundation for my challenge to the assumption that the mere participation of local groups in a transnational advocacy network leads to their political and technical empowerment. In fact, the effort of joining transnational activism may, on occasion, lead local activists and local organizations to overstretch themselves, attempt to shoulder burdens beyond their technical and political capacities, and acquire a level of exposure that may prove detrimental to the long-term sustainability of their struggles.

The second area of consideration about consequences of transnational advocacy networks must address a network's specific goals. Were they accomplished as a result of network activism? Did they have to be redefined as a result of unforeseen obstacles (or opportunities)? At what costs? In the specific case of transnational environmental advocacy networks, what are the consequences of their successes or failures for theoretical and practical approaches to environmentally sustainable development? Here I hope to advance the notion that the concept of environmentally sustainable development is all the more useful as it is approached as context-dependent, rather than as a vehicle for uniformity and consensus.

Finally, what are the consequences of transnational advocacy networks for the political contexts in which they operate? The focus of this book is on the impact of networks on local politics, particularly to the extent that they affect the level of political and technical empowerment of local civil society groups. Yet the book also discusses the consequences of transnational activism at the national and international levels, such as changes in national and international policies and the creation and reformulation of international mechanisms for grievances (such as the World Bank–sponsored Inspection Panel).

Research Method and Organization of the Book

I used several research methods to conduct this study of transnational advocacy networks. The history of the networks was reconstituted both from secondary sources and open-ended interviews. For the evaluation of the environmental challenges that the networks confronted and of the specific environmental impacts of networks' strategies I relied on technical sources such as reports by independent consultants, environmental NGOs, national governmental agencies in charge of policy implementation, and the World Bank.

Networks' politics and impacts on members and on the local political context were inferred from the analysis of documents from the archives and websites of network member organizations (such as correspondence among activists, summaries of mobilization strategies, reports of field trips, and memoranda of meetings), articles in local and international newspapers, and open-ended interviews.

I conducted more than sixty interviews during a ten-year period (1991–2001) in Brazil, Ecuador, and Washington, D.C., with NGOs and grassroots activists, government representatives at local and national levels, World Bank staff, consultants for environmental and Amerindian issues, and officials in private sector associations. I did not attempt to obtain a numerical balance among the interviewees based on their institutional affiliation (government official, NGO/grassroots group representative, or staff at a multilateral organization)

or level of activism (transnational, national, or local). I looked for individuals that were most directly linked to—or affected by—the transnational advocacy networks focused upon in this study. I must confess that, except for the logistics of traveling long distances and for extended periods of time, I did not encounter any significant difficulty in conducting interviews. Initial fieldwork coincided with the preparation and immediate aftermath of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. I believe that this research benefited, in part, from the interest generated by that event. Whenever I presented the theme of this study, I was greeted with a positive response from the potential interviewee based on his/her own interest in the topic and acknowledgement of its importance. I was also favored by the fact that close to two-thirds of the interviews were conducted with the primary goal of obtaining data for my dissertation (of which this book is a by-product). My condition as a Ph.D. student engaged the sympathy (and sometimes the pity) of interviewees who had once experienced the trials of graduate studies (many World Bank officials, consultants and staff in research institutes and international NGOs). Being Brazilian most certainly contributed to the level of comfort of my conversations with Brazilian activists and government representatives and with leaders of Rondonian civil society groups (the point was explicitly made by more than one interviewee). Finally, most interviews were conducted in Portuguese and in English, languages in which I am fluent. The interviews in Spanish were conducted with the help of a research assistant fluent in that language.

Before initiating the analysis of transnational environmental advocacy networks in Brazil and beyond I provide, in chapter 2, a historical background on development and environmental protection initiatives in the Brazilian Amazon region. The chapter describes national and international policies devised for the region from the mid-1960s to date. Development in the state of Rondônia and the environmental consequences of this process is discussed in relation to this larger context. The chapter highlights how economic, financial, and political demands of the national and international contexts impacted on the local and regional environments.

In chapter 3 I describe the origins of the Rondônia network in the early 1980s to mitigate the environmental and social impacts of highway construction and colonization in the state. I explore the dissonance of goals and choice of strategies among international and national members of the network, and discuss how these problems affected the network's impact and evolution.

Chapters 4 and 5 describe the evolution of the Rondônia network in the 1990s. In chapter 4 I analyze the network's effectiveness in influencing the design of the Planafloro project, an internationally financed program to manage Rondônia's natural resources. I discuss how the network's effectiveness was affected by efforts to deepen its local membership base and the consequences of this process for both the network and the local environment. Finally, in

chapter 5, I evaluate the Rondônia network as it reached its political maturity. The chapter describes efforts to overcome legitimacy challenges that affected the network in the early 1990s, and evaluates the impact of specific strategies in this process. The main focus of the chapter is on the role played by local groups in the Rondônia network at the turn of the millennium and the consequences of local activism for local politics and the environment.

Chapters 6 and 7 offer an opportunity for comparison between the trajectory of the Rondônia network and those of Ecuador's anti-oil network and India's Narmada network (emphasizing this latter's campaign against the Sardar Sarovar hydroelectric project). The focus of these chapters is on the effects of participation in transnational activism for the empowerment of local civil society groups and the protection of their natural environments.