

**The Importance of Local Initiatives in Finding an Effective  
Solution for Climate Change**

**An Evaluation of Potential Climate Leaders**

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## Introduction

There is consensus in the scientific world that global temperatures are rising. Most believe that the increased rate of heating is due to the high amount of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases (GHGs) that humans release into the atmosphere. A lot of these carbon emissions can be traced back to what we use for energy and how we use it (IPCC 2007: Ch.1). Since the industrial revolution, we have relied almost exclusively on burning fossil fuels to power our energy-intensive lifestyles. As more countries begin to industrialize, the concentration of GHGs continues to increase, as does the global temperature (IPCC 2007: Ch.2.2). This heating has the potential to dramatically change the way humans are able to live on the planet. If efforts are not made to decrease emission levels, we will be jeopardizing the wellbeing of future generations.

If one accepts the premises that global warming is currently being caused by a high level of human-induced greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and that this effect can be reversed or stabilized by greatly reducing our emissions, how do we best find a solution? In this paper, I will be focusing on four potential groups of actors that could take leadership on implementing a solution: international institutions, domestic governments, business, and grassroots action networks. I argue that the most effective route will be through grassroots activists empowering people to make individual lifestyle changes. This refers mainly to those living in the global North but might also be applied later to the South.

### *0.1 Global Climate Change and the Tragedy of the Commons*

The issue of climate change is complicated due to its intrinsically global character. The concentration of GHGs in the atmosphere is affected by individual and

local emissions. However, the effects of a changing climate will be felt globally. In many instances, regions that did not proportionally contribute to the majority of GHGs will be the ones that will experience the worst effects (Houghton 2004:150, 176-77, 180-81). The question of who is responsible for warming and who should be leaders in finding solutions is a major point of international political contention.

The nature of the current “crisis” situation can be illustrated through the concept of the tragedy of the commons. The land of an agricultural commons is not the property of any one person. Rather, it is a shared resource. Because everyone can use that land, all actors would benefit individually from increasing their herd and grazing further into the commons. Though each actor also factors in the potentially negative consequence (overgrazing), this is shared among the actors, meaning each individual is assigned only a fraction of the consequence. As such, each individual will make the rational decision to add to his or her herd. If all act in this way, it is inevitable that the commons will be overgrazed and no longer available for anyone to use (Hardin 1968, 1244).

The Earth’s atmosphere can be viewed as analogous to the agricultural commons. Each person or company has an incentive to pollute in pursuit of a higher standard of living and a greater economic return. This has been increasingly evident since the Industrial Revolution, with the adoption of a capitalist mode of production and the promotion of a consumer culture encouraging high-energy consuming lifestyles. The demand for more energy to accommodate these lifestyles has led to an increase in the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, accelerating the rate of global warming. The pollution of that atmosphere in this way can be seen as equivalent to overgrazing.

According to Hardin, there are two ways to solve this tragedy. The first is through private ownership and the second through mutually agreed upon coercion (1968:1247). Private ownership does not seem as relevant in this case due to the temporal and spatial expanse of the effects of global warming. The second, however, appears more applicable. If international institutions could facilitate the creation of a binding and enforceable climate change agreement that could ensure compliance from everyone, this would greatly increase the possibility for protection of the environment and mitigation of climate change. However, the international system does not necessarily work in this way. Given the perceived importance of sovereignty in the international system, cooperation at this scale appears unlikely. This argument will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 2.

Hardin condemns attempts to appeal to the conscience of exploiters (1968: 1246-7). It is here where we disagree. Unlike Hardin, I believe this is a third solution to the tragedy of the commons. If norm entrepreneurs can push to internalize norms that encourage respect for the environment and changes in consumptive lifestyles, protection of the commons through sustainable individual choices becomes a possibility. This idea will be substantiated and further developed in Chapters 1 and 2.

### *0.2 Chapter Overview*

The first chapter of this paper will provide a theoretical basis for my argument. I borrow from constructivism and, more specifically, the works published by Kathryn Sikkink, Margaret Keck, and Martha Finnemore related to norm dynamics in the international system and the importance of transnational advocacy networks. As I emphasize the importance of other actors, in particular the individual, this paper argues against the realist assumption that the state is the only relevant actor in the international

system. I also draw upon environmental sociology, as this area of thought helps in demonstrating the relationship between societal actions and the environment.

The second chapter demonstrates the greater potential for grassroots through an analysis of the relative strengths and weaknesses of all four groups of actors. It argues first that due to political, economic, and domestic factors, both individual states and international institutions are unlikely to be successful leaders for change. Further, businesses are also unlikely to initiate long-term solutions due to the nature of capitalism and corporate behaviour. Finally it demonstrates why grassroots organizations and non-governmental organizations working together to both pressure governments and businesses, and encourage individuals to alter their individual lifestyle choices, are the most likely group to create a lasting solution to climate change and environmental degradation

In the third chapter, I will explore the tactics employed by grassroots and other larger non-governmental organizations. This will include discussion of overarching themes, including shaming and framing, media and education, and community development, as well as an examination of different case studies where campaigns have been both successful and unsuccessful. This section will also emphasize the importance of building sustainable communities, both environmentally and socially, for long-term environmental protection. The purpose of this section is thus to further demonstrate the potential for grassroots leadership in climate change and identify areas to be improved upon to better formulate solutions.

## Chapter 1: Defining the Parameters of the Paper

States are not the only actors of significance in the international system. The process and phenomenon of globalization has assisted in the emergence of new actors that have been gaining in relative importance (Drezner 2001:53). Transnational and multinational corporations have optimized their production through global assembly lines and in many cases, have a great deal of influence over national governments (Strange 2000:46-9). Similarly, Transnational advocacy networks (TANs) can be powerful in rallying citizens to take action in their own lives as well as against governments, institutions, and corporations (Khagram et al. 2002:4). Whereas corporations use economic power to exert power over citizens and the state, TANs and local grassroots organizations rely on changing norms and perceptions to accomplish their goals. The following chapter will provide the foundation for the paper and will explore the theory that underlies many of the claims that will be made.

### 1.1 Definitions

Before delving into theory, it is important to define the terms that will appear throughout this paper. Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs), TANs, and grassroots organizations (GROs) are the groups that are discussed most in depth. According to Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink, NGOs can be defined as, “private, voluntary, nonprofit groups whose primary aim is to influence publicly some form of social change” (2002:6). International NGOs have transnational objectives and a decision-making structure that includes voters from at least three countries (Ibid). These are fairly broad interpretations but it must be emphasized that these are *nonprofit* groups, meaning the definition excludes business (Wapner 2002:30).

Whereas NGOs may operate at many different organizational levels (international, national, regional), GROs are expressed more at the local level. Norman Uphoff identifies differences in local organizations based on how they elicit cooperation and ensure compliance. In the GROs referred to in this paper, membership and support is voluntary and agreements based on the interests of members guide behaviour. They are a form of “bottom-up” organizations that rely on social pressure to make certain that desirable actions are followed (1993:610). The local level is very important in attempting to change attitudes about the environment and consumption, but it should be combined with a transnational form of communication to ensure strategies and information are shared with other local groups.

The issue of climate is global as well as local. As such, those groups involved in proposing solution must also be able to cooperate and act internationally. TANs are defined as “networks of actors linked across country boundaries, bound together by shared values, dense exchanges of information and services, and common discourses” (Khagram, et al. 2002:7). These networks are made possible through the globalization of information and the use of resources, such as the Internet, to strengthen their dialogue. Transnational coalitions go beyond sharing information and “coordinate shared strategies or sets of tactics to publicly influence social change” (Ibid). Transnational social movements go a step further, as they sustain mobilization for a particular issue over a longer period of time in multiple countries (Ibid). Though TSMs are more difficult to recognize and there have been fewer examples of true TSMs, there is potential for the campaign to mitigate climate change to evolve into a movement due to the urgency and global nature of the issue.

### *1.2 Environmental Worldviews: Identifying Causes and Finding Solutions*

In order to understand the variety of solutions offered to mitigate climate change, one must understand differing opinions of actors about the nature of the problem. Clapp and Dauvergne identify four worldviews that embody these opinions. The first is the market liberal. This group emphasizes the importance of economics and sustainable development in solving environmental problems. It offers solutions that are centered on technological innovations and maintains that environmental markets (such as carbon trading schemes) are preferable options (2005:4-8). This is the perspective that corporate actors argue from and the solutions proposed by businesses are within this framework.

The market liberal worldview is based on the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) hypothesis that correlates higher incomes with lower environmental degradation (especially pollution). According to the theory, low economic development corresponds to low degradation because of the limiting factor of subsistence economic activity. With an increase in development in the form of industrialization and agriculture intensification, the degradation also increased. However, this does not continue forever because the population eventually reaches a level of income where they believe they deserve a cleaner environment, either for health benefits or a better aesthetic. Combined with a switch towards an information and service-based economic sector, pollution and degradation is theorized to decrease (Stern et al. 1996:1151-52). There are many criticisms associated with this theory. Firstly, EKC only works for a limited number of pollutants and does not really consider exploitation of resources. It also does not address the fact that many developed nations move their “dirty production” overseas, which keeps the process out of sight but nevertheless contributes to a large amount of

degradation and pollution. Finally, it relies on continual exploitation because not all countries will be able to convert their economies to service-based, therefore not achieving lower environmental degradation (Dauvergne 2008:463).

The second worldview is that of the institutionalist. This is of particular importance when analyzing the role of international institutions in mitigating climate change. Institutionalists acknowledge the fact that state sovereignty is an impediment to finding global solutions to environmental problems but believe it can be overcome by an emphasis on strengthening institutions that, “promote state adherence to collective goals and norms” (Clapp and Dauvergne 2005:8). While I agree that sovereignty is a major obstacle to cooperation and support the assertion that a solution must involve ensuring adherence to norms and goals, I question whether sovereignty can be effectively overcome to achieve this.

Bioenvironmentalists comprise the third worldview. They stress overpopulation as the source of current environmental problems and argue that this combined with higher levels of consumption are drawing us closer to our carrying capacity. They maintain that we are on the brink of an ecological disaster (Clapp and Dauvergne 2005:9-10). Social greens, the fourth worldview, also agree with this sentiment. However, they believe that the cause is not overpopulation but overconsumption in developed nations that is indicative of an exploitive, capitalist world system. The solution, they argue, is to return to a localized economy (Ibid:12-13,16). Most NGOs, GROs, and TANs likely fit into one of these views.

### *1.3 Constructivism and the Importance of Norms*

Although there are numerous popular theories that attempt to explain and understand the international system, neo-realism and neo-liberalism remain the dominant approaches in policy making. Both theories work from the assumption that anarchy is a fundamental feature of the international system and that states are the primary units of interaction. Though they disagree on the extent to which states will cooperate or compete, both agree that states pursue security in self-interested ways (Wendt 1992:391-2). As the argument of this paper centers on the potential for individual actors to influence global outcomes, it rejects the rationalist concept of state behaviour. Instead, it draws on aspects of constructivism, in particular the importance of the internationalization of norms and other forms of soft power in shaping state identity. It will argue that this logic can be extended from the state-level to the individual-level, where local communities are also shaped by the emergence of different norms and changing standards of desirable behaviour.

Constructivism emphasizes the role that identity and values play in understanding how states interact with each other and within the context of anarchy. A leading theorist, Alexander Wendt, states that, “a fundamental principle of constructivist social theory is that people act towards objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings those objects have for them” (1992:396-7). For example, whether a state perceives another as a friend or foe will largely influence their actions towards them (Wendt 1992:397). The fact that meaning plays a large role in these behaviours implies that there is a strong symbolic aspect present in the interactions between individuals, groups, and states. An emphasis on meaning as a primary factor as opposed to fundamental human nature also

allows for the possibility of change. Interpretations of meaning are more dynamic and adaptable than human nature. Furthermore, it clears room for other actors to participate in altering perceptions, and thus behaviour. As such, it appears to be a more accurate depiction of the international system.

One way in which meaning can be influenced is through the propagation and adherence to particular norms. International norms are defined as, “shared expectations or standards of appropriate behaviour accepted by states and intergovernmental organizations that can be applied to states, international organizations, and/or nonstate actors of various kinds” (Khagram et al. 2002:14). It is also important to recognize that individuals and small groups can create and follow their own norms within a particular community.

According to Finnemore and Sikkink, norms can play a significant role in world politics. There are four factors that they identify as reason for this. The first is legitimation, wherein states, or elites within states, might choose to accept a particular norm to legitimize its regime internationally, which could lend credit to it domestically as well. The relative prominence of the state or actor in how they are viewed by the rest of the community can also influence the propagation of the norm they are promoting. The nature of a norm can also influence its likelihood of acceptance (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998:906). For example, it has been theorized that transnational advocacy groups tend to form around norms that address issues related to, “those involving bodily harm to vulnerable individuals, especially when there is a short causal chain (or story) about who bears responsibility [and] issues involving legal equality of opportunity” (Keck and Sikkink 1999:98). In the case of grassroots environmental action, people often need to

believe they can personally impact the outcome by following a norm of optimal sustainability before they accept it and adopt it into their lifestyle.

To understand the ways in which norms influence actors once they are accepted, one must be able to conceptualize their evolution within the international system. This is most succinctly described through the norm life cycle. There are three stages: emergence, cascade, and internalization. Norm emergence usually occurs through the efforts of norm entrepreneurs, who act as teachers of morality. They educate the public about why aspects of society might be immoral or unethical and attempt to persuade people to adopt new standards of behaviour more aligned with these beliefs. The way that these entrepreneurs disperse their ideas is through a platform, using different tactics to gain the attention and sympathy of their audience. Dramatizing the issue in this way using strategic language is known as *framing* the issue. This struggle usually happens at the domestic level (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998:896-7).

As a norm gains acceptance among states (or a group of actors, in the local context), a tipping point may be reached, in which a certain threshold of states have adopted the norm. Which states adopt the norm is also significant, as a country that promotes a norm that has previously acted in opposition to it is more critical to the cause than one that has followed it consistently (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998:901). For example, in the case for the international acceptance of an environmental norm that views the high production of carbon dioxide as immoral, having the United States or even China adopt this norm would greatly improve its potential for widespread adoption.

Once this threshold is exceeded, it results in a norm cascade, where the proportion of states adopting a particular norm increases without necessarily domestic pressure to

conform. Finnemore and Sikkink argue that this is due to socialization and the demonstration effect. States will adopt these norm through symbolic appeals to, “their identities as members of an international society” (1998:902). The tipping point allows for a change in the guidelines for desirable and acceptable state behaviour. To remain a part of the identity of a member of the international system, a state must adapt its behaviour to conform to the new definition, meaning they are greatly encouraged to adopt the norm. Pressure to conform increases as more states adopt “appropriate” behaviour, which persuades more states to join to avoid being labeled as a rogue state (Ibid:902-3).

Internalization occurs when a norm is so widely accepted that it becomes ingrained in all aspects of society. These norms are often institutionalized as well, implicitly promoted in professions and bureaucracies. They are no longer actively questioned but followed and forgotten about (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998:904-5). However, as the life cycle has already shown, norms are not permanent. Norm entrepreneurs can continue to question established norms in the future and begin the cycle again when circumstances dictate the need for change.

This paper asserts that the norm life cycle can apply to individual communities as well as the international and state level. The theory itself is based on psychology and sociology, as evidenced by the reliance of norm cascade on the effect of peer pressure on behaviour and the desire to conform (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 903). If individuals within a community adhere to and promote certain desirable behaviours in relation to the environment, it may pressure other members of that community to engage in that behaviour as well. As such, environmental change can theoretically be promoted at the state level, in individual communities, or through transnational non-state actors

communicating through mechanisms other than the state. This will be applied further in the second and third chapters.

#### *1.4 Environmental Sociology*

Understanding the interactions and relationship between nature and society is also central to conceptualizing the promotion for a paradigm shift in thinking throughout my thesis. The field of environmental sociology offers insight into this relationship. Previous scholarship perpetuated a dichotomy of nature and society, separating human culture and its existence within the world's ecosystems. It also promoted an anthropocentric way of thinking, with humans almost being exempt from ecological limitations. With the rise of the environmental movements, sociologists Dunlap and Catton criticized this type of thinking, advocating instead for a paradigm shift in the discipline towards viewing ecology as a significant influence on society and vice versa. There are two theories that have come from this shift that are especially relevant for my purposes: ecological Marxism and new political ecology (Goldman and Schurman 2000:263-65).

Ecological Marxism argues that capitalism also has certain environmental limiting factors and industries must invest in revitalizing degraded production conditions. This is often accomplished with the creation of new technologies that are meant to clean up the surrounding environment. These technologies often alter elements of nature and can act to remake nature instead of simply commodifying it. This has implications for our connection to nature, as it fosters the belief that we do not rely on it in order to survive (O'Connor 1998:167). Without understanding the complexity of the relationship between nature and society, technological developments through the capitalist model encourage

unsustainable systems and growth. This assists in explaining our over-reliance on technology and the need to reexamine it.

New political ecology helps explain individual and society interactions with local environments. It examines how politics and culture enter into our ideas about nature and how these factors influence the way issues are framed and dealt with, while also acknowledging the role of the environment in providing context for politics and culture. For example, how societies have interacted with the environment in terms of degradation can often influence their cultural history (Goldman and Schurman 2000:568-70). Understanding these links can contribute to a better understanding their cultural and political context and also assist in the formulation of better solutions. NGOs and GROs can adopt these perspectives in order to understanding and address the roots of environmental problems, which can allow them to develop more appropriate solutions. A greater understand of how a society views and values nature can also help NGOs discover the best way to raise that issue on the public agenda.

Environmental sociology aims to address the nature/society divide. This is also what environmental NGOs, GROs, and local communities are also trying to do. They are both working to demonstrate the intimate relationship between human society and the environment we live in. If they are able to enlighten others about their connection to place, this can have large implications for environmental protection and long-term solutions for climate change. It is important to recognize this paradigm shift described throughout the paper, as it is what is what citizen action groups are promoting through their various tactics.

## **Chapter 2: The Potential of Relevant Actors to Pursue Effective Solutions**

The complex nature of the climate change issue, with its inherent multi-sector influence, means there are many actors with diverse interests that are involved in the debate over solutions (Andonova et al. 2009:57-58). The broad groups are identified here as: international institutions, domestic governments, businesses/transnational corporations, and civil society, including NGOs and GROs. The following will examine each group of actors and assess their respective strengths and weaknesses in developing and executing a solution to reduce emissions and mitigate climate change.

### *2.1 International Institutions*

As has been stated previously, climate change has global ramifications and so should be addressed at a global level. International institutions have the potential, in theory, to be effective promoters of global cooperation and as such, have been given greater responsibility for setting global standards. The United Nations Environmental Program has been the most prominent in this respect, laying the foundation for global negotiation conferences to develop international climate treaties, such as the Kyoto Protocol (Clapp and Dauvergne 2005:9). These climate conferences themselves can also encourage change. The conferences act as a forum for world leaders to gather together in a context that they would not normally meet. Some argue that simply discussing these environmental issues is a step in the right direction. The discussions can also have symbolic importance for the domestic population. If citizens see that discussions are taking place, this might demonstrate to them the relative importance of the environment, perhaps persuading them to care about these issues as well.

Since the 1972 Stockholm Conference, the first recognized international environmental conference, NGO participation in environmental regimes and negotiations has greatly increased. Not only has the number of NGOs involved increased, but the role that they play has been extended as well (Hawken 2007). NGOs are viewed as, “the people’s voice and shapers of public views about climate change and the appropriateness of governments’ responses” (Corell and Betsill 2001:95). During negotiations, NGOs act as liaisons between the public and policy makers, using framing and shaming tactics (discussed in greater detail in the next chapter) to report the positive and negative actions of governments at the conference to the public. This in turn pressures leaders to adopt stances that will be portrayed positively by these groups. These tactics can be quite effective in an international negotiation setting, as it puts added pressure on leaders to make changes to policies that might embarrass them diplomatically (Tjernshaugen and Lee 2007:186-88). For example, environmental NGOs, in particular the Climate Action Network, were very effective in altering Norway’s stance on targets during Kyoto negotiations through shaming the country by calling attention to its destructive activities (Ibid:193-203).

The increased role of NGOs adds to the legitimacy of these international institutions, making them appear democratic, representative of the interests of civil society, and global rather than simply international. The last point is arguably the most significant, as many believe these institutions to have the greatest potential to overcome state sovereignty in a state-based international system. According to Karen Litfin, states “engage in sovereignty bargains” (1997:174), in which they may retain their sovereignty in the absolute sense, but also give some of it up through diplomatic pressures to comply

to standards that they may not have on their own (Ibid). This partial erosion of sovereignty is important for climate change negotiations because the solution must require all members of global society to adhere to strict limitations on greenhouse gas emissions.

Though there are positive aspects that offer support for the argument claiming that international institutions will be the most effective in providing global solutions for climate change, there are some fundamental barriers that decrease their realistic potential. These barriers are centered on persisting sovereignty and budgetary constraints. Regardless of whether bargaining is taking place, sovereignty remains the most important principle in the international system. Beginning from the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, the right of states to have control over its own territory has underpinned the interactions between state actors. This principle has greatly impeded climate change negotiations in the past and present, encouraging lowest common denominator (LCD) policies, non-binding agreements, and general lack of implementation.

Due to national sovereignty's primary role in negotiations, policies are consensus based. That is, a certain proportion of states must sign and ratify an agreement before it comes into effect. This is true of the Kyoto Accord, which came into effect only after Russia ratified in 2004, satisfying Article 21.5, stating,

This Protocol shall enter into force on the ninetieth day after the date on which not less than 55 Parties to the Convention, incorporating Parties included in Annex I which accounted in total for at least 55 per cent of the total carbon dioxide emissions for 1990 of the Parties included in Annex I, have deposited their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession. (UNEP 1998:19)

This type of decision-making ensures that the policies that are drafted are of the lowest common denominator. Because a consensus must be reached before a policy can have

any force, the limitations outlined in the agreement must satisfy a certain number of state actors. As such, it must be drafted to appease those that desire fewer limitations (Lacasta et al. 2007:214). This was true of Kyoto negotiations, where actors that had economic benefits in continuing to use fossil fuels negotiated for less stringent emission targets (Levy and Egan 2003:816-17).

The problem with this type of decision-making is that the targets that are set are inevitably lower than they must be to create change. The scientific community has presented evidence that argues that anthropogenic climate change is actually occurring calls for much more drastic emission reductions if the harmful effects are to be alleviated. As such, the agreed upon targets seem to be fairly ineffective and more of a symbolic gesture towards sustainability rather than a progressive step forward. Reaching the standards outlined by science would require much stricter targets. Some have estimated that it would take 30 Kyotos to stabilize carbon dioxide levels, which would take about 300 years of negotiations at the rate the international community is currently moving (Bachram 2004:2). However, given the complexity of the political side of climate change, it is unlikely that a sufficient number of states would adhere to such regulations. Thus, for this issue it would be extremely difficult to find a compromise that would satisfy both the politics and the science.

Another major issue is the non-binding nature of agreements and the lack of enforcement mechanisms for non-compliance. Due to the fact that the international system is made up of sovereign states, international agreements tend to be non-binding, meaning states are not necessarily forced to comply with the agreement, though they may be strongly encouraged to do so through normative factors (Chinkin 1989:856-7). This is

a major problem for climate change agreements because if not all states apply the necessary limitations, global emissions will not be reduced and the temperature will continue to rise. Furthermore, if the sanctions for non-compliance are too lenient, many states will find it in their interest to not comply. This appears to be the case for the Kyoto Protocol, which calls only for a compliance action plan and a suspension of the ability to buy and sell permits for deviant states (Hagem et al. 2004:2112). For a country like Canada, with its still large amount of lucrative natural resources, the cost of non-compliance seems lower than compliance. This has been demonstrated in the Harper government's dismissal of Kyoto targets as being impossible to reach (CBC News 2007). This lack of incentive to adhere to already lenient policies seriously inhibits the ability of agreements to accomplish their tasks.

A final issue worth mentioning is the budgetary constraints placed on international environmental institutions. In a 2005 report, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) argued that their budget of \$239 million was much too small for the increasing number of global environmental issues that it must address (UNEP 2005:6). This seems well founded when one compares this number with the budget of the US Environmental Protection Agency, \$7.8 billion (Ivanova 2005:35), or even the World Wildlife Fund, \$160.8 million in 2007 (WWF 2007). The fact that domestic agencies and NGOs have a larger budget than UNEP reduces its legitimacy as a strong, competitive actor. A lack of funding equates to an inability to support projects that could potentially make a difference. Also, if UNEP is meant to be the most significant actor in the international environmental regime, it must be able to adequately compete with strong financial actors that see environmental protection as a great impediment to economic prosperity. In an

international system that greatly values capital, these financial institutions and corporate actors easily outcompete UNEP, making it extremely hard for UNEP to be effective.

Although international environmental institutions are advertised politically as being the primary affecters of change in the international system, the issue of sovereignty and the lack of funding towards the major institution (UNEP) seriously question the legitimacy of this allocation. Unless these institutions can find a way to surpass sovereignty and make effective legally binding sanctions that will ensure compliance, it is unlikely that they will be able to set sufficient attainable goals.

## *2.2 Domestic Governments*

Provincial (state) and national governments are another group of actors that have great potential to be climate leaders. Domestic governments have the ability to create their own policies and legislation to effectively lower emissions. While national leadership may be lacking in passing innovative policy, individual leaders in many sub-national governments have taken it upon themselves to set more stringent standards. This section will discuss why sub-national leaders have emerged in this crisis and why many national leaders have fallen short. It argues that there are inherent bureaucratic factors that impede the ability of national governments, particularly in the United States and Canada, to set and follow adequate reduction targets. Because of these barriers, it is unlikely that national governments will be leaders for change. However, as one moves down the political chain towards more local political actors, the potential for change increases, suggesting that sub-national governments might join with NGOs and GROs to become a large part of the solution.

The United States is an interesting case study of the difference between the

behaviour of national and sub-national (state) actors. Environmental policy usually comes from the top-down, meaning that the Federal government sets limitations and states must adhere to those limitations and/or exceed them. In the past, with legislation such as the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act, most states did not attempt to exceed the limits set. However, climate change has seen a reversal in this behaviour, with states setting fairly strict restrictions while the federal government has failed to even ratify the Kyoto Protocol (Engel 2006:7).

Kirsten Engel has identified four factors she believes are responsible for this shift. The first refers to the potential for local economic benefits through emission reductions. The renewable energy is fairly local in nature, in that it relies mostly on immediate resources (sun, wind, water) rather than fossil fuel technology, which usually requires out-of-area drilling in some insecure places. This could provide greater local opportunities for jobs and is thus an incentive for states to set their own restrictions (2006:11). Connected to this is the competition that occurs between states and provinces to have greater control over these emerging industries and prestige in the eyes of the nation as leaders (2006:13). Another factor is the political opportunities afforded to politicians that wish to be viewed as progressive and anti-big oil. In contrast to the national government's inaction, these politicians are now seen as proactive and visionary, which can be an important factor for elections (2006:12).

Winning elections based on these types of platforms also means that the voters in that state or province want to see changes as well. Just as the global consequences of climate change are regional, some states and provinces will be more affected than others. As such, they have a greater incentive to try to find solutions. For example, many coastal

cities in North Eastern United States and Canada have been the leaders in local and regional emission reductions. These are also the areas that would be most affected if sea levels were to rise and have natural resources that will likely be negatively impacted by climate change (Engel 2006:13). Voters and political leaders have recognized this and it seems to be factoring into policies.

It is also important to note the unique position of local governments in comparison with national governments with relation to their constituencies. Local governments are better equipped to find solutions that work because they are more likely to be in direct contact with their voters, broadening their knowledge about the issues that affect the people they represent (Urpelainen 2009:86). This is especially true for municipal governments, which have also proven to be leaders for climate policy innovation. Cities are major contributors to carbon dioxide emission levels, which makes their relative influence in reducing emissions considerable (Betsill and Buckley 2004:477).

Since Kyoto, many transnational coalitions and networks have been created as forums for cities worldwide to share ideas and compare strategies. The Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) program is one of the more well-known and organized networks. Based on the assumption that, "the barriers to local action on climate change are primarily due to lack of information" (Betsill and Buckley 2004:478), CCP's 561 municipalities participate in workshops, training, and sharing of resources that give them the tools to develop an optimal emission reduction strategy that fits within their local context. The current members constitute 8% of total global emissions (Ibid). If they can significantly reduce their emission levels, this would not only be significant from a global reduction perspective, but could also be a symbol of hope for members of civil society.

If sub-national groups have made such strides in climate policy, why are national governments so reluctant to make reductions? There are four main factors that are identified as being the most noteworthy impediments: the election effect, party loyalty, Committee shifts, and lobby groups. All four factors relate to systemic barriers within a bureaucratic system and as such, provide support for the argument that national governments are very unlikely to be climate leaders on their own. These factors will be examined in the context of the Canadian government.

The election effect embodies the discrepancy between short-term politics and the need for a long-term solution. In our democratic system, terms are generally between three and four years. During that term, politicians must act in a way that would lead to re-election. This is not compatible with the nature of the climate change issue. Climate change requires a long-term solution that may require sacrifices during the early years of policy inception. Most politicians would not chance upsetting a proportion of voters and financial backers by creating tough restrictions because that would threaten their chances of re-election. Without a leader prepared to make significant and innovative changes, the status quo is likely to prevail. This greatly reduces the potential of Parliament to be initiators of change through policy.

However, it is not entirely the fault of political leaders for not wanting to propose tough policy. The concern for re-election and worry about a tarnished political reputation are legitimate. If the majority of citizens do not want to see these changes occur, a politician will be prevented from passing effective policies or from being elected in the first place. A prime example of this was seen during the 2008 Canadian Federal election, when Stephane Dion's liberals lost in part because of a controversial carbon tax proposal.

Most Canadians were not accepting of the plan, despite it being promoted by environmentalists, including David Suzuki, believing it to be too economically damaging. The effects of this continue to be seen in current Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff's campaign. In a speech in Edmonton last February, Ignatieff acknowledged that Dion had made a mistake with the carbon tax because it did not appeal with the Canadian people (Whittington 2009). Ignatieff's environmental plan centers on investments in green energy (Ignatieff 2009), which are less controversial for the public, as it does not necessarily involve tough emission restrictions.

Beyond the issue of leadership and public opinion, other obstacles exist within Parliament itself that can prevent meaningful policy from being passed. Former Foreign and Defense Minister Roy Rempel provides an insider account of the current Parliamentary situation, which can help to explain these difficulties. He argues that party loyalty is a major impediment for accomplishing anything. Party backbenchers are well controlled through political incentives and punishments, making it unlikely for Members of Parliament (MPs) to cross party lines when it comes to voting on particular policies. This sustains the status quo, as conflicting party ideologies often distract from the issue at hand (Rempel 2002:183-9). If MPs only see a party and not an idea, the merit of particular bills can be underappreciated. Perhaps if individual MPs were more encouraged to evaluate the potential of bills regardless of where they originated, greater change could be seen.

Another salient parliamentary issue that Rempel identifies is the high turnover rate in both Committees and Cabinets. Parliamentary Committees are the testing ground for policy ideas (2002:192). They connect MPs to the Canadian public through Committee

meetings, where experts and citizens can present evidence and ideas to those responsible for making policy decisions. They also act as a research organization, working in smaller groups to delve deeper into complex topics and providing information for MPs that may need specific details to create better policies (Canada 2008:1). As such, these groups must be highly knowledgeable in their specified research area to be particularly effective. This, however, is often not the case. The average turnover rate for Committees during the life of Parliament (3-4 years) is 65-70%. It can take months to gain expertise, and because MPs are constantly being moved from one Committee to another, the conversation and debates are often superficial (Rempel 2002:195-7). With a lack of meaningful discussion, it is more difficult for policy makers to be adequately informed about the types of policies that may be necessary and desired. This has great importance for climate policy, as the science is complicated and thus necessitates the inclusion of experts into debates. If the major medium through which experts and MPs communicate is faulty, it may be more difficult for effective policies to be made.

The final factor impeding appropriate governmental policy response is the relative power of lobby groups in influencing decision-making. The industry groups that would be most negatively affected by climate are mainly those corporations that are highly energy intensive. In particular, the non-renewable energy industries (coal, natural gas, oil, car) and forestry industry will likely incur significant financial losses if tough environmental policy was passed. In Canada, these are also the groups that are the most historically important and thus have large, well-established lobbies in Ottawa (Langille 1987). Due to a disproportionate amount of financial resources, these industries have a greater ability than citizens or environment groups to influence voting patterns on climate

change policies. Because tough restrictions may result in a dramatic decrease in profits and significant job loss, MPs representing those areas where these industries have great importance are pressured to vote against harsh policies.

Beyond the context of Canada, industry lobby groups in other countries, particularly the United States, have also stalled the adoption and discussion of effective policy through advertising and education campaigns. The Global Climate Coalition (GCC) was a group of business leaders that was extremely powerful at the national level. Not only did senior members have close ties with top government officials, but they also provided large financial donations to campaigns. In the 1996-97 election, the oil industry, which comprises a significant part of the GCC, 'donated' \$12.4 million to Republican Party, no doubt in an attempt to ensure there would be a leader that would protect big business at the expense of environmental change. The group has also funded scientists with the intended purpose of providing evidence against anthropogenic climate change. The findings of these scientists have been presented to both the government and the general public, greatly contributing to confusion regarding whether climate change is occurring (Levy and Egan 1998:343-4).

It is clear that there are major impediments facing national governments, particularly in North America, when it comes to creating and passing legislation that calls for strict emission reductions. Without leadership that is wholeheartedly committed to significantly improving the sustainability of their country, it is likely that politics will prevent national governments from lowering emissions. This is not to say that there are no examples where national governments have been vital to pushing forward an agenda of sustainability. Certainly Scandinavian governments have been quite receptive to

environmentalism, but this is due more to heightened public desire to protect the environment and traditional worldviews rather than something intrinsic to national governmental operations. As such, national governments alone are viewed as fairly ineffective when developing tough environmental policy.

It is also important to emphasize that the levels of government that are showing successes in sustainability are local in nature (cities and communities). These bottom-up initiatives tend to be more successful than top-down policy because they come directly from local citizen concerns and the positive effects of implementation can be seen almost immediately. As such, when policy is sensitive to the local context, it is more likely to gain approval by local citizens and be implemented to become optimally effective.

### *2.3 Business Groups*

The green product market has been greatly increasing throughout the past decade. This success reflects growing consumer demand for goods that have a lower environmental impact. Corporations, seeing this market shift, have begun to spin out 'environmentally friendly' products and invest in the development of 'green technology.' Many people maintain that technological innovation driven by business will be the saviour for this environmental crisis, but how accurate is this belief? Judging by the abundant 'buy green' rhetoric, one can assume that much of North America's population also has strong faith in the effectiveness of green products. But, are these consumer goods actually good for the environment, or are they just a product of good advertising and good business? This section will address the potential of business in leading the climate change solution and also the problems inherent in placing too much faith in corporations to be socially and environmentally responsible.

An increase in public awareness about environment issues has created in a higher demand for products and energy sources that are more environmentally sustainable. This has resulted in the emergence of new niche markets, particularly in the field of renewable energy. Investments in these markets may increase the level of technological innovation, which could assist in formulating a sustainable future. This is the area where business could have the greatest potential to become climate leaders. However, it is important to note that these markets will not thrive without a significant amount of consumer demand. Wind energy is a good example of this. This industry is in its early stages of growth and its success will rely on the ability of investors and consumers to collectively decide to invest in it and purchase the energy it produces. Business alone may not be able to facilitate this and it will require efforts from community leaders as well as governments through the promotion of subsidies (Lewis and Wiser 2007:1848-50). Continued innovation is thus driven by consumer demand for new types of technology. Though the availability of that technology depends on company investments in research and development, the viability of new industries depends on societal demands for change, which can be promoted by citizen action groups.

Industry has had a large part in getting us into our current environmental situation. Because industry still contributes the bulk of greenhouse emissions, getting business to lower those emissions will need to be a large part of a climate action plan. This has been recognized in international agreements as well as national and regional policies. The Kyoto Protocol included the possibility of market mechanisms, including emissions trading, joint implementation of sustainable projects and the clean development mechanism supporting sustainable development in non-Annex I (developing) countries

(UNFCCC 1998:6-7,11-12,15). The European Union has implemented plans for an EU-wide cap-and-trade scheme with its businesses, which it hopes will allow it to more easily reach the targets established through Kyoto (Engels, Knoll, and Huth 2008:276-77).

Business-funded Clean Development projects are also taking place throughout the developing world, some more successfully than others.

Cap-and-trade is a market mechanism of particular importance, as it has become widely adopted, or at least considered, throughout the developed world. The system attempts to lower overall emissions by setting a limit for total emissions and then distributing permits to businesses that specify the amount of allowable emissions. Firms can then buy and sell permits based on cost-benefit analyses calculated to determine whether it is more profitable to lower emissions and sell permits or continue to emit and buy the necessary permits (Colby 2000:638-39). In a long-term cap-and-trade system, the total emission level would be lowered throughout time, persuading businesses to make changes to their equipment and energy usage to become more sustainable.

The potential of this system is fairly obvious. It promotes a gradual lowering of emission levels, which would allow businesses to continue to operate profitably while working towards the goal of sustainability. It allows for flexibility for businesses while also providing an upper limit for emissions (Stavins 2008:299). Therefore, it should theoretically appease both business groups and environmentalists. However, this is not the case, as arguments persist over the length of time that should be allowed between successive reductions and what those reductions should amount to. While most business groups want a more gradual reduction scheme, environmentalists insist that the levels must be lowered more significantly, as is required for meaningful climate mitigation.

Governments are also responsible for setting limits, meaning that there must be extensive decision-making and compromise to establish specific targets. As discussed previously, negotiations over details can take a long time and compromises often go in favour of industry groups. As such, it is questionable whether this system will be as effective as it needs to be. It may be another case of too little done too late.

Another market mechanism included in the Kyoto Protocol that has gained significant recognition is the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). CDM attempts to encourage sustainable development by encouraging businesses in Annex I countries to invest in projects that promote emission reductions in non-Annex I countries. Annex I countries are rewarded for these investments through emission credits, helping their country reach Kyoto targets (Haites and Yamin 2000:27). Though the idea behind this mechanism is good (promoting long-term transition to sustainable resources), the fact that it is market driven has meant the easiest and cheapest projects with the greatest return are the ones that are pursued at the expense of more long-term, effective transition projects. The cheapest projects are ones that convert highly potent greenhouse gases, including methane, nitrous oxide, and hydrofluorocarbons, into less potent gases, such as carbon dioxide (Pearson 2007:249). These are short-term reductions that perpetuate reliance on fossil fuels. Renewable energy projects, in contrast, are more expensive and thus less pursued, even though they are arguable the most effective in the long-term (Pearson 2007:248,250).

Despite the potential of emerging 'green' markets and market mechanisms included in the Kyoto Protocol, some argue that the corporate capitalist mode of production and consumption is incompatible with true sustainability. Because corporations are ultimately

liable to their shareholders, the bottom line will always be profit. Though social accountability has increasingly been included in public relations campaigns, it is in pursuit of higher profits. This is especially relevant for the logic of greenwashing. If enough people believe environmental sustainability to be a factor in their purchasing decisions, one would assume that companies would want to become more sustainable in order to meet that demand. However, it is expensive to instate the necessary changes to make the life cycle of a product less harmful. It is also true that due to the hectic lifestyle of the average consumer, it is less likely that they will closely examine the accuracy of labels and simply believe what the company is saying is truthful (Ramus and Montiel 2005:383-88). Thus, it makes better business sense to invest in advertising that convinces consumers that their product is “eco-friendly” while making small, insignificant changes that would not incur large financial losses.

Greenwashing is a large threat to the legitimacy of the claim that business will develop solutions for climate change. If there is not sufficient pressure placed on corporations by civil society forcing them to be accountable for environmental degradation, it is unlikely that corporations, on their own accord, will make those changes. As such, if corporations are to change, society must change first. Consumers must care about the environment enough to boycott companies that produce unsustainable items before companies will adequately change their behaviour. Consumers must also take the time to investigate the legitimacy of environmental claims on products, or at least pressure the government or other groups to establish a meaningful labeling system to distinguish truly sustainable products. Business is consumer-driven, and perhaps if consumers were better informed and more inclined to care about

environmental issues, sustainable business could become a consequence of a grassroots solution.

It would be incomplete to provide an analysis of the role of business in the climate change solution without fully addressing the system that it is embedded in. The consumer culture that is created by capitalism may never be compatible with a sustainable future. Capitalism is founded upon individualism, which contradicts the communitarian basis of environmentalism. While capitalism encourages the pursuit of wealth and constant competition, grassroots environmentalism encourages communication and cooperation, attempting to create sustainable communities built on respect and trust. If people are consistently trying to claim ownership of resources and believe that ownership permits them to exploit as they choose, this will inevitably lead to overconsumption through the process of one-upmanship. Sustaining increasing levels of consumption puts stress on natural resources. Technological innovations may artificially relieve or displace environmental stress, but it does not address the root problem, that is, overconsumption.

#### *2.4 Local Groups: Civil Society, GROs, NGOs, and TANs*

Lasting change can only be fully successful if it is accepted and promoted by civil society. Because of the many conflicting interests and broad policy spectrum of global warming, it will be extremely difficult for changes to be made from the top-down. There must be a change in the way ordinary people behave with respect to the environment. As a global society, we have become incredibly wasteful and irrational in our interactions with the earth. We have constructed methods and systems of production that operate in direct opposition to natural cycles. Instead of working with our environment, we are working against it, taking from it but not giving back to it (Berry 2009:5,19-20). Climate

change is a symptom of this destructive behaviour. This fundamental incompatibility cannot be sustainably solved with more technology, but with a paradigm shift towards true sustainability and respect for the environment. To effectively implement this shift, these feelings must be internalized in the minds of ordinary citizens.

The relative potential of the other actors outlined in this section relies on behavioural changes in civil society. If people begin to care more about environmental issues, such as climate change, and are willing to make short-term sacrifices in order to give future generations the chance to enjoy long-term benefits, changes in government policy and corporate behaviour may follow. It will be much easier for government leaders to step forward to instate tougher restrictions if the majority of the population supports those measures and has mechanisms in place to meet them successfully. Business will follow consumer demand, and if people desire to a more sustainable lifestyle, there will be a large market for environmentally conscious goods and services. These changes in government and business can serve to solidify civil actions. As such, it appears that the common denominator for a catalyst in environmental change is the ability of civil society to make individual lifestyle changes that will influence the way they consume and participate politically.

The leadership that has been seen at the municipal level is also significant, as it has emerged from the efforts of local citizens. As mentioned previously, it appears that there are greater opportunities for expressing political voice at local levels of government as opposed to provincial or national levels. This implies that citizens are more likely to appeal to their local government to express grievances and request changes (Buttel 2003:312). If these requested changes are implemented, it can empower citizens by

encouraging them to believe that their individual actions can have positive and meaningful effects. If people believe they can have an influence in these outcomes, they may feel a greater sense of control over their role in environmental issues (Kasper 2008:15-16). This may translate into a belief that collective lifestyle changes can actually have a large impact on climate change mitigation. Perhaps if people feel more secure in their potential to make a difference and trust that others will also make the necessary changes with them, it will result in a collective undertaking of behaviour change.

If NGOs, GROs, local groups and their respective networks can collaborate successfully, they can become important leaders for climate change mitigation and adaptability, particularly with respect to long-term sustainability. The reasons for this potential leadership are related to both the nature of the environmental movement and what these groups set out to accomplish. The most recent environmental movement, which includes environmental activists as well as social justice initiatives and resistant indigenous cultures, already comprises over 2 million NGOs and GROs and that number continues to grow (Hawken 2007:11-12). These organizations represent millions of people as well as non-human elements of our collective environment. The number of people that are being mobilized through this movement offers support for its potential leadership. It allows for a potential shift in power from the few to the many.

Leaders of corporations and Western governments have been able to use their disproportionate financial power to maintain the status quo, perpetuating underdevelopment, poverty, and environmental degradation. The only way to encourage a shift away from the status quo is to connect enough people that are willing to work against its continued dominance. This has been the crux of every large social movement

in the past, including the civil, gay, and women's rights movements. The first stage of the norm cycle is the development of domestic and international movements, which makes them necessary for instating a normative change (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998:896-7). With enough support from a passionate general public and a collective sense of moral duty to change the projected course of human history, civil society can regain the power it has lost.

One of the most important elements in establishing a united front is encouraging people to develop a sense of care and connection for a specific issue. To create a sustainable future, we must develop an emotional attachment to the environment, which will facilitate a desire to protect it. This can come from developing spaces and systems that promote regular interactions with the natural world. For example, the incorporation of green spaces into urban city centers can foster respect and appreciation for the environment. Green spaces have been positively correlated to enhanced psychological health (Sanesi et al. 2006:121-22), which can encourage a more positive view of the environment and feelings of responsibility for its protection. Experiential education can also promote a positive and deep connection to the environment at a young age by getting children to experience nature through play, hikes, and reflection (PalMBERG and Kuru 2000:34-5). Developing a sense of place in nature, especially at a younger age, allows for an attachment to the environment that promotes respect and care.

Facilitating collective action for lasting change also requires the development of trust between members of various communities. Though trust is difficult to build, it is very easy to break. Communities must work consistently to build relationships with each other to decrease the likelihood of breaking trust. This can be done through encouraging

dialogue and meaningful, positive, and productive interactions within communities. Efforts are being made to develop spaces for these interactions through community development projects and the encouragement of participation in grassroots organizations. These "norms and networks that facilitate collective action" (Woolcock 2002:22) are known as social capital. The hope is that by increasing interactions and connections between people, they will develop a greater trust for each other and become more willing to rely on them to work towards a common future (Ibid). This is especially important for an issue like climate change that requires true collective action to protect the commons. If one does not trust the other members of their community to make the changes they themselves are trying to make, their efforts may seem insignificant and thus not worth doing. This can discourage action. Conversely, if communities trust each other to make changes together, this support system can encourage positive collective changes on a larger-scale.

Another argument in favour of the potential of GROs in solving the climate change issue is the connection between increased local engagement in projects and its longevity. In any sustainable development project, pursuing the input of the local population and building their capacity to take control over the project in the future is extremely important (Pretty and Ward 2001:214f). This is important for large NGOs and development agencies to understand if they plan on building something in a community. They cannot simply impose general ideas, but must engage with the residents to understand the needs of the community and take the local context into account. Developing a strong network of GROs within a community empowers members to ensure their voices are heard. This may improve the success of a project.

While GROs and civil society can work towards developing a bottom-up solution for sustainability through local empowerment and developing social capital, larger NGOs, TANs, and social movements have a greater ability to connect those smaller groups and focus on a wider variety of issues. They also have the resources to get certain issues onto national and international political agendas as well as corporate agendas. Through large media campaigns, they can increase their membership and funding. They put pressure on corporations to change their actions by disseminating information about business practices to the public so consumers can vote with their wallets. They mobilize citizens to send letters to encourage governments to make responsible policies and are present at international conferences where they use symbolic gestures to shame deviant countries.

Both approaches are necessary to promote significant change. NGOs and TANs use a range of tactics to improve the context in which local groups can improve community sustainability. For example, NGOs can put pressure on governments to provide incentives for renewable energy use, allowing local citizens to install systems at a lower cost. NGOs focus on developing the large-scale mobilization necessary to provide an adequate opponent to governments and businesses. Local groups provide the connections and social capital necessary to inspire appreciation, care, and passion for the environment. Together, the diversity of these groups provides the best response to the issue of climate change and, more generally, long-term sustainability.

This group of actors is not perfect; there are some major obstacles limiting its potential for success. These are centered on personal freedoms and choice and include apathy, skepticism, and individual economic wellbeing. As stated previously, apathy can

potentially be overcome through rooting environmental experiences within a sense of place. However, it is unlikely that all members in society will want to develop this connection to each other and nature. Many people place importance and value on other issues, some of these being in contradiction to a sustainable future (Heath and Gifford 2006:51-3). Others simply do not care about issues external to them. Addressing this apathy is extremely difficult and there is really no one way to go about it. It requires a personal transformation and one must hope that the apathetic person will eventually be encouraged and inspired to care about something.

Beyond apathy is skepticism and the “something will save us” mentality. A vocal group of skeptics exists and some members are extremely influential and convincing. The science of climate change is complicated and the data can be manipulated fairly easily. Scandals like “Climategate” provide the skeptics with material to further deny the existence of global warming (Chadha 2009). Connected to this group of people is the pervasive mentality that something will always save us in the end. Whether that is a miracle technology or God depends on one’s belief system. This type of thinking is dangerous, as it promotes blind hope and inertia. It is often tempting to believe these ideas. Changing habits is not easy. It involves vision and personal sacrifice (Hartmann 2006:13-17). However, delaying action only decreases our potential to reverse the problem. Educational efforts must be made to persuade people to begin acting in the present while looking towards the future. This may be achieved by framing environmental issues in terms of solutions. NGOs and GROs have been making strides to do this.

The health of the economy and personal economic wellbeing are very important to

a significant portion of people. Tough action on climate change has been framed as detrimental to the economy, causing many to be wary of changes. This is not necessarily true, as there are many opportunities for ethical businesses to thrive in an economy of sustainability. While it is true that huge corporations that employ a significant portion of the world may never be ecologically viable, localizing economies may still provide people with sufficient incomes to maintain a comfortable lifestyle. Energy efficiency and thriftiness can also save money, making it more appealing to lower one's ecological footprint. Perhaps if climate change were partially framed as economically beneficial in the long-term, a greater proportion of people would be willing to make lifestyle changes that also benefit the environment. This would be an appropriate first step towards an eventual shift to true sustainability.

#### *2.5 Which Has the Most Potential?*

Though international institutions, states, and businesses may have greater theoretical potential to do something about global warming due to larger resources and greater traditional power, there are fundamental flaws that emerge in reality that prevent these groups from being the best leaders. While NGOs, GROs, TANS, and civil society may also encounter large obstacles in their pursuit for solutions for climate change and a sustainable future, they have the greatest potential to be leaders. Decision-making in government and business ultimately revolves around the average person. If citizens and consumers can assert their power through a collective voice and can work together to make changes in their local communities, the possibility of changing the predicted course of our society exists. There are numerous examples of these changes being pursued already. Some of these will be discussed in the next chapter.

### **Chapter 3: Tactics and Tools Utilized by NGOs and GROs**

The following chapter will discuss the primary strategies employed NGOs and GROs as well as the tools they use to accomplish their goals. It is important to understand these tactics and tools as they provide insight into how these groups are proving to be leaders. The range of NGO and GRO activities are diverse and types of strategies employed are dependent on the type of organization. This section will explore some of these tactics to provide support for the primacy of NGOs, GROs, and civil society in the mitigation of climate change and the transformation towards sustainability.

#### *3.1 Primary Tactics*

Shaming and framing are the two primary tactics utilized by citizen groups, especially domestic and international NGOs. They are often used in tandem to pressure corporations and governments to alter their activities.

##### 3.1.1: Framing

Framing is extremely important in any campaign. It is defined as, "the interpretive work that activists do in presenting issues to the public and decision makers" (Tjernshaugen and Lee 2007:188). Activists create symbols to represent specific normative statements and often frame issues in ways that appeal to the empathetic side of human nature. Issues can garner a significant amount of support when framed in the right way. For example, climate change has traditionally been framed as an issue involving ecosystem collapse. The symbolic image of the thin polar bear floating on a shrinking ice floe, which has become the primary image related to climate change, projects the idea that we are destroying the planet for innocent creatures. Though this frame was somewhat successful in the beginning, activists are starting to realize that framing climate change in

terms of economic benefits and human security will appeal to a greater proportion of the population. As such, the symbolic images are now of the climate refugee fleeing a sinking island and the Inuit person no longer able to practice their traditional way of life (Martello 2008:351-2).

Framing is of great significance in agenda setting. Issues gain and lose prominence on political agendas depending on their relative importance for policy makers. Although governments may lack the ability to be true leaders for mitigation, meaningful change still requires the development of a political context more conducive to making individual changes. Activists have the important role of framing climate change in a way that pushes it high on government agendas, increasing the potential for policy changes. To this point, climate change has remained relatively low on political agendas, especially in relation to security and economic issues. Perhaps securitizing the issue will encourage a more dramatic response, as states tend to be more interested in finding a solution to a problem once it becomes a security concern. Emphasizing the local in terms of consequences and solutions may also help to elevate the issue. According to Pralle, “problems that are immediate and proximate to people tend to elicit the most concern from citizens” (2009:791). If citizens believe climate change to be an issue that affects them personally, they may pressure their governments to bring about a stronger response. Adding an ethical or moral dimension can attract more passionate support, strengthening citizen power. Finally, framing an issue like climate change by providing solutions might reduce cynicism and encourage action (Ibid).

The media plays a large role in the propagation of particular frames. The activists in Greenpeace are especially talented at developing media campaigns to help frame

environmental issues. By producing dramatic images and powerful slogans, some of their campaigns have been very successful in garnering support. This is particularly true for some of their earlier campaigns, including anti-nuclear and anti-whaling. The details of their use of media in some of these campaigns will be discussed in greater depth in the next section.

### 3.1.2: Shaming

Framing provides the foundation for the second primary tactic. A framed issue can become normative when a moral dimension is added to it. An individual’s decision to care about the issue and adhere to its premise then becomes contentious. In the case of climate change, if the issue is framed as being immoral to have a large carbon footprint, whether one agrees with this statement can have large implications. When a significant proportion of a population begins to accept that norm, activists can mobilize shame against entities that do not adhere to it. Shaming pressures those groups to accept the new norm and behave accordingly (Winston 2002:81). For example, consumer watch groups identify companies with environmentally harmful practices in the hope that consumers will put pressure on those companies to change their actions. The multiple campaigns against Royal Dutch Shell exposing, among many things, its exploitative practices in Nigeria and its intended disposal of the toxic Brent Spar oil tanker into the Atlantic Ocean proved to be a public relations nightmare. This mobilization of shame has forced Shell to reevaluate its corporate social responsibility and has arguably contributed to some positive changes in its operation procedures and treatment of workers and the environment (Livesey 2001:65-6).

Shaming is utilized frequently at the international level. By mobilizing shame

during high-profile conferences, activists can “exploit the symbolic legitimacy of foreign pressure and international institutions to unleash domestic moral opprobrium” (Moravcsik 1995:161). Climate Action Network (CAN) International has proven quite persistent in its use of shame tactics during both the Kyoto and Copenhagen climate change treaty negotiations. During the Kyoto negotiations, CAN acted as an umbrella group of international and domestic NGOs. Members of the groups acted as observers and met daily to discuss the events of the day. They acted as liaisons for the media, providing easily understood sound bites describing the progress of negotiations to share with the general public. The fact that Norwegian environmental NGOs are respected and trusted by the domestic population and INGO support gave them increased credibility, their reports were important in directing public opinion. At the conference, Norway was depicted as a “climate villain” (Tjernshaugen and Lee 2007:198): a country that claimed to want to pursue environmental sustainability while continuing to increase its extraction of petroleum. This embarrassment contributed greatly to Norway agreeing to set binding limitations on emission levels and also stalled the development of gas-fired plants (Tjernshaugen and Lee 2007:197f).

In the recent Copenhagen negotiations, CAN International’s campaign, Fossil of the Day, presented awards to the state it believed had done the most to stall negotiations that day. Videos of the award ceremonies were posted on a blog and also reported by the media. Canada received numerous daily awards, for activities ranging from promotion of the tar sands to the refusal of negotiators to stick to the 1990 base level for emission reductions. Because it received more awards than all other countries present, Canada was then awarded the Colossal Fossil: Fossil of the Year title (CAN 2009). Unlike the

Norwegian example, the Canadian media did not cover this story to the extent that would be required to elicit sufficient public outcry. However, since it was covered by international media sources (Leahy 2010), the international system is now at least aware of the resistance of the current Canadian government. As Canadians value their image internationally, perhaps the initial shaming of the conference may encourage citizens to pressure the government to reconsider its stance on the climate change issues.

### *3.2 Major Tools*

This section will identify the tools, strategies, and avenues utilized by NGOs and GROs in getting their message to the public, gaining support for issues, and coming up with solutions. The media and education are arguably the most significant tools for disseminating information. Linking is also an important strategy that is used to increase the support base for a certain issues. Increasing social capital and building a sense of community can provide an avenue for developing long-term solutions for climate change and sustainability.

#### 3.2.1: The Role of the Media

NGOs and GROs have taken great advantage of the media, especially the Internet. The media plays an important role in strategic shaming and framing and also facilitates the mass mobilization of people and the dispersion of knowledge. The public relies on various forms of media to provide them with succinct and accurate information. Because the science of climate change is complicated, the public requires a simple version to be easily available. NGOs act as translators of scientific findings, using the media to disperse the message. However, the large amount of information and the ease of manipulating scientific data can often lead to confusion. Large news sources also tend to

feed on controversy, making it more likely they will report on studies that deny global warming and furthering uncertainty. A large public understanding of the science is a necessary first step in finding solutions. NGOs must find a way to make their side more convincing, perhaps by providing clearer explanations of causes and effects, and must also be able to reach a larger audience. This often means moving away from more traditional sources of information.

NGOs often use the media as a tool for shaming. Through reports and corresponding press releases, NGOs often reveal information regarding the environmental practices of various firms and governments. Publishing this data can allow consumers to make informed decisions about the products they are purchasing and can also pressure businesses to alter their record if they rate particularly poorly. TerraChoice is a Canadian group that works to make consumers aware of potentially greenwashed products. It empowers consumers to understand the marketing of the product before purchasing it (TerraChoice 2010). Other NGOs use symbolic displays to expose companies that have engaged in greenwashing. For example, Greenpeace UK created the Emerald Paintbrush award for greenwashing and tried to present it to the executives of the company (British Power). The video of the attempted presentation was posted on the Internet and was also reported on by news agencies (Greenpeace UK 2008).

The media also allows for an issue to be dramatized, giving it a strategic frame. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, Greenpeace pioneered the use of “media mindbombs.” In his book entitled *The Storming of the Mind*, Robert Hunter, one of the founders of Greenpeace, builds the concept of the mindbomb around Marshall McLuhan’s idea that information is packaged and presented to the public through

communication tools (the media). Hunter wanted to apply this to ecology principles, through sending powerful images to the media that portrayed a collective environmental experience (Weyler 2004:76). Operating under the assumption that a picture is worth a thousand words, Greenpeace brought film crews on their controversial campaigns in order to get the perfect shot that would stay implanted in the minds of those that saw it (Greenpeace 2010).

The anti-whaling campaign was particularly successful using this method. The picture of a lone activist on a zodiac taking on enormous, steel whaling ships combined with images of the gory killing of whales was picked up by international media and resonated deeply with the public. Following that publication, membership in the group increased significantly, along with financial contributions. It also assisted in persuading Canadian officials to alter their stance on whaling. In this case, the media played a significant role in developing urgency for the issue by raising it higher in public consciousness and the political agenda (Weyler 2004:319f).

The Internet has revolutionized the way groups can network with each other and communicate with the general public. It is of particular benefit to smaller groups, which thrive on a diverse network of people but would not have otherwise been able to generate that amount of connections. Social networking sites, like Facebook and Twitter, facilitate the mass mobilization of people passionate about particular issues. The idea of a Carrotmob began in San Francisco, California. It began with the belief that consumers could organize themselves to reward businesses that agree to make their companies more efficient and sustainable. The concept was put forth to businesses in the Bay Area and companies bid on the proportion of profits from the Mob day that they would put towards

investing in sustainable infrastructure. K&D Market was the highest bidder, with a promise to dedicate 22% of its profits towards updating to a more efficient lighting system. On Mob Day, the Carrotmob consisted of over three hundred people and at the end of the day, K&D's profit was quadruple that amount it generated at the same time the year before. Two thousand dollars was invested in a new efficient lighting system. These types of campaigns thrive on the widespread use of the Internet (Scola 2008).

### 3.2.2: The Importance of Education

Educating the public is a major strategy used by NGOs and GROs to broaden the base of understand and generate ideas for solutions. The previous section expressed the importance of using the media to provide the public with more accurate information about the climate change issue. According to Hawken, "the most powerful instrument wielded by the movement is the unimpeded flow of information" (2007:177). However, the media is not the only way NGOs and GROs can work to educate the public to alter perceptions about the environment. Primary and Secondary education is an area that could allow for a great shift in future interactions with the environment. Community groups may be able to have a strong influence in facilitating a shift in the way subjects are taught in schools.

The North American school system is largely focused on what is deemed "academic" and scientific. This rarely includes experiential or systemic learning. In the past decade, the Norwegian term *friluftsliv* has become a part of the discourse on outdoor experiential education. It is a complex term and refers to "a tradition of thought attentive to the folkways of 'nature life'" (Henderson 2007:4). It implies living with nature and connecting it with place (Wattchow 2007:241). It involves slowing down to appreciate

the beauty of nature and develop feelings of safety and comfort within the natural environment (Gelter 2007:40-42). This is extremely important to integrate into primary and secondary education if future sustainability is to be achieved. When nature is connected to a sense of place, as it can be through outdoor experiential education, it can create an emotional association in the self. If one harbours strong positive emotions with the environment, they will be more conscious about the actions they pursue that could potentially damage the integrity of the natural world. This change in thinking is necessary for a paradigm shift to occur.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the connection between outdoor experiential education and heightened environmental awareness. Scandinavian countries have been particularly good at integrating these concepts into their education curriculums. A study of two schools in Finland demonstrated a difference in how nature was viewed by pupils that had varying levels of experience in outdoor education. Those that had greater experience with the outdoors also, "seemed to have a strong and clearly definable empathetic relationship to nature" (Palmberg and Kuru 2000:34). Though both groups had difficulty in connecting local issues to global issues, those that had the most experience often attached an emotional component to specific issues (Palmberg and Kuru 2000:35). These changes in thinking and feeling associated with outdoor experiences are viewed as being part of long-term perspective changes. That is, having these experiences earlier in life can change the way students see the environment, and wish to protect it, in the future (Bogner 1998). Fostering this type of learning may have a large impact on how the future generation interacts with the natural world, perhaps making environmental sustainability a more desirable objective.

Experiential education also works to facilitate systems thinking. Applying the ecological principles of interconnectivity and system-oriented design to the education system may allow students to better make connections and understand the larger picture. When they understand and appreciate the complexity of the world's major systems, they are in a greater position to try to find solutions to problems. For example, the promotion of systems thinking in industrial practices can facilitate waste reduction through more efficient and ecological internal design rather than simply relying on end-of-pipe reductions (Hawken 2007 181-2). Further, embedding an understanding of complexity into our way thinking can encourage environmental protection and conservation as people have a heightened awareness of the consequences of individual actions.

### 3.2.3: Linking People and Ideas

Connecting individual NGOs and GROs with each other and with society as a whole is a vital component to amassing support for environmental issues. The level of connectivity between environmental and social justice groups is higher than has been seen in other movements of the past. It is one of the most important characteristics of the movement, as groups rely on these networks to spread messages and share ideas. TANS facilitate these connections. By bringing different groups into contact and making them aware of the activities being pursued by each, there can be a harmonization of action. Groups can specialize their issue areas, covering a range of campaigns while also focusing their financial and human resources (Hawken 2007:144f).

The Climate Action Network is an example of a transnational NGO that acts as an umbrella group to connect multiple organizations that address climate change. It is an informal network that uses bi-monthly newsletter updates to inform organizations about

the variety of campaigns occurring. This type of networking allows groups to share information and coordinate tactics without requiring high amounts of financial resources. CAN also has its own coordinating body, which strengthens relationships among members from Northern NGOs and Southern NGOs. Though it is not perfect, as there are issues associated with disproportionate funding between the North and the South and the big and the small, it provides all groups with extensive information resources and the network to coordinate actions (Duwe 2001:177f). As a collective, these organizations can then be more effective than they would be alone.

Environmental justice is another recent trend in environmental activism. The movement connects the environment with social justice issues. Following from the social green worldview, the movement aims to address the relationships between social and economic inequality with environmental degradation and inequality. Much of the research regarding the impoverished and the environment emphasize the link between poverty and degradation of the local environment. This focus has shifted to a greater acknowledgement of the connection between impoverished areas and the concentration of industries viewed as unhealthy and environmentally unsound. For example, in the United States, a large proportion of hazardous waste treatment facilities are set in poor communities of colour (Foster 1998:776). Acting to address issues of environmental racism can empower communities to engage in moving towards a sustainable future while also addressing past inequalities.

Connecting issues of social justice engages a sector of the population that may have been previously alienated by past environmental movements. Environmental groups are often criticized for having a lack of racial and socio-economic diversity. Most groups are

dominated by white upper-middle classmen (Buttel 2003:313). As a result, many groups remain out of touch with the reality facing a large portion of the population. For example, petitioning to slow global warming for the sake of saving polar bears in an area where survival is a daily struggle is unlikely to incite support (Friedman 2007:1). The environmental justice movement has opened avenues for dialogue between these groups, broadening the base of support and offering additional entry points into the climate change debate. Social justice groups often offer a different perspective on environmental issues, which adds towards a fuller picture of the issue. Viewing the issue in terms of how to build capacity, empower poorer communities, and change systems of inequality that led to human and environmental insecurity, can then inspire more effective solutions that address the connectivity of many issues.

#### 3.2.4: Community Building

Building socially and ecologically sustainable communities will be an important tool for a positive environmental future. GROs and other civil society groups are vital to facilitating this development. Through organizing meetings with members of a community, they can increase social capital substantially. This can assist in creating a sense of community, which can improve connection to place. This is important for building care about environmental issues. It also helps to build trust between members of a community, which can become the foundation for collective ecological sustainability.

As mentioned previously, social capital refers to the relationships generated within a society due to an increased amount of regular, positive interactions with other members of one's community. The object of accumulating social capital is maximizing sustained levels of trust. This requires a long-term relationship of reciprocity and exchange, the

establishment of a set of norms, rules and sanctions that are collectively agreed upon, and the creation of groups and networks that increase the connectedness of a community (Pretty and Ward 2001:211).

If trust can be increased within a particular community, it can greatly increase their potential to take initiative in becoming more sustainable. In a psychological study, researchers showed that when people saw that their neighbours were making changes to their lifestyles to decrease their carbon footprint, they were more likely to make changes themselves. Conversely, one could also be deterred from making changes if they saw their neighbours blatantly refusing to make changes themselves (American Psychological Association 2009:67). By improving the level of trust between members of a community, people can be encouraged to make collective changes, especially if there are community leaders present that wish to promote a sustainable lifestyle.

Building social capital can also facilitate a connection to place. Community members can become empowered when they work together to transform an ordinary space into a symbolic place. This can have positive consequences for the happiness and wellbeing of citizens and also how they interact with the surrounding environment. In Portland, Oregon, for example, a GRO called the City Repair Project inspires local communities to adopt an intersection and transform it into a public place. By constructing natural buildings, or placing benches where neighbours can communicate with each other, or creating community gardens, residents are empowered to engage with each other and the environment to make their community better (City Repair Website 2010).

A similar effect comes from communities adopting brownfields and turning them into something positive for their area. Brownfields are former industrial areas that have

been abandoned. They are often viewed as an eyesore for the residents living around them, yet they can also be an opportunity for new vision and community involvement (DePass 2006:602-3). Detroit is an excellent example of a community that is attempting to transform an industrial past into a greener future through this process. Groups within the city intend to instate urban agriculture programs on abandoned city lots (Huffstutter 2009). This could have great potential if the community continues to be engaged in the project and the farms utilize ecological principles to become sustainable.

Ecovillages represent the ultimate example of the amalgamation of the development of community relationships and environment protection. An ecovillage is defined as:

A human-scale settlement (50-500 members) that is intended to be full-featured – providing food, manufacturing, leisure, social opportunities, and commerce – the goal of which is the harmless integration of human activities into the environment in a way that supports healthy human development in the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual ways, and is able to continue into the indefinite future (Kasper 2008:13)

The village is built to create a greater sense of community while also encouraging more sustainable interactions with the environment. Members trust each other to treat the environment with respect and so do the same themselves. The village concept also attempts to overcome the nature/society divide, which is important for long-term sustainability. By spreading these ideas to outsiders through offering workshops and internships about sustainable living, they demonstrate that an alternative lifestyle exists. Knowing this can provide the impetus for others to engage in a more sustainable lifestyle within their own communities. Facilitating this change in thinking is very important for improving our relationships with the environment.

Developing and fostering a sense of community is vital to achieving a sustainable future. When people respect each other and feel secure in their relationships, this can

affect how they interact with the environment. In these situations, care and compassion can be extended to the natural world, especially when that sense of community is rooted in an ecological place. GROs can strengthen these bonds between community members by encouraging action towards specific local environmental issues and creating networks between local groups and citizens. By empowering local citizens to engage with each other and the places in which they live, communities are better equipped to move towards ecological and social sustainability.

These tactics and tools utilized by NGOs, GROs, and civil society help to illustrate why these groups must be the leaders of environmental change and how they are attempting to take on that leadership role. As a collective, these groups are pushing for a paradigm shift in the way we think and act towards the environment and towards each other. This is what is needed before governments, international institutions, and business can ever be truly successful in mitigation in the long term. Outdoor experiential education and developing a greater sense of community in connection to place are extremely important in encouraging a change in thinking. The use of the media and the linking people and ideas are the tools that allow for a widespread transformation, and this movement is very good at using these tools to its best advantage. Through an examination of the tools and tactics, we can begin to understand the diversity of the groups involved in this movement and see how they working together for a common goal. This collective struggle for more equitable and fulfilling relationships and systems is powerful and is also better able to address the root causes of climate change. Only when the causes are recognized can we attempt to find solutions and these strategies demonstrate that NGOs, GROs, and civil society are better able to address both of these

issues.

### **Conclusion**

Although I have argued that NGOs, GROs, and civil society have the greatest potential to be the leaders for climate change mitigation through facilitating a paradigm shift, they are not sufficient on their own to bring about a sustainable future. There must be constant interaction between all sets of actors to encourage the best possible outcome. International institutions, domestic governments, and businesses can fill roles that civil society cannot, as was evidenced by the positive aspects of each described in the second chapter. By accommodating the others' faults, these actors can work together within their own niche towards global sustainability.

International institutions are still required to generate a change in global norms to pressure countries to conform to environmental standards to which they may be resistant. However, these institutions and regimes must also include the work of international NGOs, as they are the norm entrepreneurs that provide the connection to civil society that is needed to stimulate the desire for change. National governments remain important as they develop the rules that enforce good environmental behaviour. Although the majority of citizens must first actively advocate for these changes, the state is important in solidifying those actions and codifying them in law. Finally, while technological developments on their own might not encourage a lasting sustainability, they are still important in transitioning towards smartly designed and energy efficient spaces. Businesses facilitate this development, but civil society provides the market. There must be a collective decision made among a large group of people that they will invest in sustainable technologies.

The common thread always returns to civil society. The most important aspect of a long-term solution is the normative change required of civil society. A change in thinking must occur in how we view our place in connection to the natural world. This change must come from within individuals, promoted by NGOs, GROs, and other groups within civil society. Without this collection of personal epiphanies about our relationship to the environment and to each other, problems will continue into the future, impeding our ability to be truly sustainable. The three actors that I have regarded as secondary all view climate change as a problem in and of itself and do not necessarily recognize its connection to a larger problem with Western society, that is, our disconnection with nature and continued degradation of our environment and social interactions. Civil society groups have recognized this problem and are working together to implement various solutions. This attention to the ultimate causes of degradation and the desire to find a holistic solution involving a change in thinking is what makes civil society the greatest potential leader for mitigating climate change and pursuing a future of sustainability.

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