The Role of Transnational Actors in Global Environmental Politics

Oluseyi Elijah AKINBODE
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Political Science
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria
Email: akinbodeoluseyi080@gmail.com
Phone Number: +234 803 563 0706

Bimbo OGUNBANJO, PhD
Department of Government
Lagos State University
School of Basic and Advanced Studies
Email: mbimboogunbanjo@yahoo.com
Phone Number: +234 803 712 8001

Abstract
The modern era of global environmental politics coincided with contemporary scholarship on transnational actors. The 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment took place in Stockholm one year after a special issue of *International Organization* was released entitled "Transnational Relations and World Politics". Since then, there has been a dramatic growth both in the involvement of transnational actors in environmental politics and research on their activities. The growing presence of transnational actors has been evident at the principal global environmental conferences. The ubiquitous presence of transnational actors reflects the increasingly cross-border nature of environmental problems. A wide range of transnational actors with varying motivations and pursuing different strategies have been a constant presence in the world of environmental politics. The aim of this paper is to survey the role of these actors. It seeks to consider the types of transnational actors, their strategies and their influence across the field of environment politics. In doing so, it seeks to move beyond traditional debates about whether the rise of transnational actors requires that we replace a state-centered view of the world with a society-dominated view. Rather the discussion in this paper supports the view of many scholars in the field that global environmental problems cannot be solved without governments and hence networks of state and non-state actors are required. The paper proceeds as follows. A section charts the evolving body of literature on transnational actors. It then proceeds to consider three types of transnational actors – for-profit, non-profit and individual actors – and the role they have played in environmental politics. The paper later turns to reflect on the principal question most scholars seek to answer, that is, under what conditions do transnational actors influence policy outcomes? It concludes with some reflections on how we are to

understand the role of transnational actors in environmental politics and world politics more generally.

Keywords: Transnational Actors, Environmental Politics, Environment, Environmental Problems, World Politics, State and Non-State Actors

دور الجهات الفاعلة عبر الوطنية في السياسة البيئية العالمية

خلاصة

تزامن العصر الحديث للسياسة البيئية العالمية مع الدراسات المعاصرة حول الجهات الفاعلة العابرة للحدود الوطنية. انعقد مؤتمر الأمم المتحدة المعني بالبيئة البشرية عام 1972 في ستوكهولم بعد عام واحد من إصدار عدد خاص من المنظمة الدولية بعنوان "العلاقات عبر الوطنية والسياسة العالمية". ومنذ ذلك الحين، حدث نمو هائل في مشاركة الجهات الفاعلة العابرة للحدود الوطنية في السياسات البيئية وفي الأبحاث المتعلقة بأنشطتها. لقد كان الحضور المتزايد للجهات الفاعلة العابرة للحدود الوطنية واضحاً في المؤتمرات البيئية العالمية الرئيسية. ويعكس الوجود المنتشر للجهات الفاعلة العابرة للحدود الوطنية الطبيعة المتزايدة العابرة للحدود التي تتسم بها المشاكل البيئية. لقد كان هناك مجموعة واسعة من الجهات الفاعلة العابرة للحدود الوطنية ذات الدوافع المتباينة والتي تتبع استراتيجيات مختلفة، تواجدًا مستمرًا في عالم السياسة البيئية. الهدف من هذه الورقة هو دراسة دور هذه الجهات الفاعلة. ويسعى إلى النظر في أنواع الجهات الفاعلة عبر الوطنية واستراتيجياتها وتأثيرها في مجال السياسة البيئية. ومن خلال القيام بذلك، فإنها تسعى إلى تجاوز المناقشات التقليدية حول ما إذا كان صعود الجهات الفاعلة للحدود العابرة الوطنية يتطلب أن نستبدل وجهة نظر العالم التي تركز على الدولة بنظرة يهيمن عليها المجتمع. بل إن المناقشة في هذه الورقة تدعم وجهة نظر العديد من العلماء في هذا المجال بأن المشاكل البيئية العالمية لا يمكن حلها بدون الحكومات، وبالتالي هناك حاجة إلى شبكات من الجهات الفاعلة الحكومية وغير الحكومية. تستمر الورقة على النحو التالي. ويرسم أحد الأقسام المجموعة المتطورة من الأدبيات المتعلقة بالجهات الفاعلة العابرة للحدود الوطنية. ثم تنتقل إلى النظر في ثلاثة أنواع من الجهات الفاعلة العابرة للحدود الوطنية ـ الجهات الفاعلة التي تسعى إلى الربح، وغير الربحية، والأفراد ـ والدور الذي لعبته في السياسات البيئية. تتحول هذه الورقة لاحقًا إلى التفكير في السؤال الرئيسي الذي يسعى معظم الباحثين إلى الإجابة عليه، وهو، تحت أي ظروف تؤثر الجهات الفاعلة العابرة للحدود الوطنية على نتائج السياسات؟ ويختتم الكتاب ببعض الأفكار حول كيفية فهم دور الجهات الفاعلة عبر الوطنية في السياسة البيئية والسياسة العالمية بشكل عام.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الجهات الفاعلة عبر الوطنية، السياسة البيئية، البيئة، المشاكل البيئية، السياسة العالمية، الجهات الفاعلة الحكومية وغير الحكومية

Introduction

Global environmental politics entered a new phase at the same time that research on transnational players became more advanced. A year after the publication of the "Transnational Relations and World Politics" special issue of International Organization, the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was held in Stockholm.[1] Research on transnational actors' actions and their role in environmental politics have grown dramatically since then. The main international environmental conferences have witnessed an increase in the number of transnational players. Approximately 170 nongovernmental groups attended the Stockholm Conference in 1972; 1,400 attended the Rio Earth Summit in 1992; 8,000 attended the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002; and 9,856 attended the Rio+20 Summit in 2012. Indeed, it is estimated that

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transnational organizations generally had grown from 2,795 in 1970 to 68,220 by 2022.[2]

The rising international character of environmental issues is reflected in the pervasiveness of transnational players. It is well acknowledged that international collaboration is required to address a variety of environmental concerns, including whaling, ozone depletion, biodiversity loss, and climate change. So, it should come as no surprise that the field of environmental politics has always been home to a diverse array of multinational players, each pursuing a distinct set of goals. This paper's goal is to examine each of these actors' roles. It aims to take into account the many kinds of transnational players, their tactics, and their impact on environmental politics. By doing thus, it aims to go beyond the long-standing discussions regarding whether the emergence of transnational players necessitates the replacement of a state-centered with a society-dominated understanding of the world. Instead, the paper's discussion concurs with the opinion of a large number of experts in the subject, who hold that networks of state and non-state actors are necessary to address global environmental issues because governments alone cannot solve them.

The paper goes like this. The growing amount of research on transnational players is mapped out in one part. It then discusses the roles that three different categories of transnational actors—for-profit, non-profit and individual —have had in environmental politics. Later on in the paper, the focus shifts to considering the main query that most researchers try to resolve: in what circumstances do transnational players affect the results of policy? It ends with some thoughts on how we should interpret the role of transnational players in global politics in general and environmental politics in particular.

Transnational Actors: What Are They?

Since the conclusion of the Cold War, there has been an increase in transnational players in the international arena, particularly in the field of environmental politics, which has resulted in a growing body of literature discussing their influence and function. The phrase "transnational actors" refers to nongovernmental players that organize in network forms beyond state borders. It encompasses both for-profit entities like business organizations and multinational companies (MNCs) as well as non-profit entities like advocacy networks and environmental NGOs.[3] This tradition's academics contend that "transnational relations matter in world politics" and that understanding state behavior in international relations requires considering the cross-border operations of non-state entities and subunits of government.[4] In this view an intergovernmental approach to world politics is too narrow because it implies limited access to the international system, which "no longer holds true in many issue areas".[5] In other words, we must look inside and outside state borders.

The idea of transnational actors directly challenged the conventional wisdom of realists and neorealists alike, which held that the state is the main player in a system

marked by anarchy.[6] This idea gained attention in the 1970s with the work of Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye. This literature, in fact, argues that governments no longer have control over non-state actors who can organize and cross national borders, such as people, multinational firms, or advocacy networks.[7] It is based on a more substantial critique of intergovernmental methods. But the research strategy that Keohane and Nye proposed did not bear fruit quickly, particularly in the subject of environmental politics, where the majority of the literature focused on the impact of economic concerns and multinational corporations.[8] In the 1980s, the dominance of neorealist approaches under the influence of Kenneth Waltz[9] and the intensification of the Cold War, meant that much scholarly work returned to focus on nation-states and security issues[10].

The 1990s saw a resurgence of interest in transnational players with the publication of Risse-Kappen's book *Bringing Transnational Relations Back In* (1995). "Regular interactions across national boundaries when at least one actor is a non-state agent or does not operate on behalf of a national government or an intergovernmental organization" is how he characterized transnational relations.[11] The literature also underwent a sea change in the 1990s, with an emphasis on the circumstances in which transnational players' effect is perceived replacing previous disagreements about whether or not they affect outcomes. In fact, by posing the question, "Under what circumstances do transnational coalitions and actors succeed or fail in changing the policy outcomes of states in a specific issue-area?" Risse-Kappen's volume laid forth the general framework for transnational relations study. The domestic state structure and the function of international regimes were shown to be critical to the success of transnational players in the research.

But the subsequent parts will focus more intently on the circumstances in which various kinds of players have impacted global environmental results. Prior to proceeding, it is crucial to take notice of a few themes that have emerged in research on global environmental governance as well as in the current literature on transnational actors. First, questions regarding the democratic legitimacy of international institutions have become more and more prevalent. Many academics believe that the participation of international players—more especially, actors from civil society—offers a source of democracy. For example, non-state actors' involvement in international organizations may serve to revitalize them and strengthen their democratic legitimacy, according to former UN Secretary Generals Boutros Boutros Ghali and Kofi Annan.[12-] While not all scholars accept that there are democratic deficits in the first place, or that transnational actors offer the solution, debates about the democratizing potential of these actors has been a common theme in much of the literature[13].

Second, the emphasis on networks is a defining characteristic of the literature on transnational players. As we will talk about later, players in civic society are

particularly exhibiting this tendency. Essentially, a large body of research shows that, in contrast to states and international institutions, networks with voluntary, reciprocal, and horizontal patterns of communication and exchange are significantly more adaptable and efficient in complex environments.[14] Some theorists argue that the subject is shifting from studying "international relations" to studying "global society" because of the emphasis on "governance" and "networks".[15]

Three Categories of Transnational Actors

The literature on transnational actors lacks a definite typology, but for-profit and non-profit actors are commonly distinguished. This is a differentiation based on reasons. For-profit players, such as multinational corporations (MNCs) and different commercial associations, are driven mostly by instrumental objectives, usually their owners' or shareholders' desire for profit. Conversely, non-profit actors—often referred to as civil society—such as advocacy networks, environmental NGOs, and epistemic communities, assert a common good. This is a typical cautious approach to environmental preservation in environmental politics.[16] It should go without saying that these kinds of divisions are never ideal. For instance, some business groups are formally non-profit, despite the fact that their members are probably multinational corporations operating for profit, and even profit-driven entities can claim a shared benefit. Furthermore, some academics classify transnational actors based more on their organizational structure than their motivations.[17] However, in keeping with most researchers, actors will be categorized for the sake of this paper according to their motives.

For-Profit Actors

Although the majority of research on transnational actors in environmental politics focuses on civil society actors, it is crucial to briefly discuss the role of transnational for-profit actors here. This is because studies on MNCs influenced a large portion of the early literature on transnational relations, and because MNCs frequently make investments in environmentally sensitive sectors of the economy, like the energy sector. International environmental talks have had considerable participation from MNCs and corporate groupings. Even if industry had a little voice at the 1972 Stockholm Conference, individual MNCs and business groups clearly had an impact at the Rio Earth Summit and every other important conference that followed. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), for instance, has been actively involved in discussions on a wide range of topics, from biosafety to climate change. It was founded in 1995 following an earlier merger and comprises some of the biggest and most influential corporations in the world, including BP, Wal-Mart, Deutsche Bank, General Motors, and Coca-Cola.[18]

While some for-profit actors have collaborated on environmental projects and appear to assist sustainable development, in many crucial instances they have not. Thus, it should come as no surprise that academics have tried to determine the circumstances

in which transnational corporate actors have been able to curtail the goals of global environmental governance and reject the necessity of business regulation. Three methods are often seen in the literature. The structural power of business comes first. Some academics concentrate on these actors' prominent positions in the global economy in the spirit of the critical theories.[19] When a group with the membership of the WBCSD stakes out its position, as it did, for example, in opposition to a global corporate accountability agreement, which was raised at multiple sustainable development forums, governments take notice[20].

Second, the majority of research on for-profit actors highlights their ability to lobby.[21] When it came to climate change, for instance, US-based organizations like the Climate Council and the Global Climate Coalition (GCC), which primarily represented the interests of fossil fuel corporations like Exxon and Shell, had a well-established plan in place for combining local and international lobbying in order to obstruct consensus prior to the United Nations negotiations in Kyoto in 1997. These parties worked internationally to build alliances with the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), namely Saudi Arabia, who had a similar interest in seeing the discussions stagnate, in addition to engaging in domestic lobbying within the US. For instance, the Climate Council is reported to have written the negotiating statements for many small OPEC countries[22].

Third, business groups have been trying to promote voluntary rules and principles and green business concepts in place of direct lobbying, especially during the past ten years. In some cases, they have even replaced direct lobbying efforts. Examples of organizations that have supported such projects include the World Economic Forum, the International Chamber of Commerce, the International Business Leadership Forum, and the WBCSD.[23] Former GCC members have also made an effort to change perceptions of them after the group disintegrated in 2000 as a result of intense criticism from environmental NGOs. The name change of BP from British Petroleum to Beyond Petroleum is among the most well-known instances.[24] For many, this is as little more than "greenwash."

Non-Profit Actors

The great bulk of research has focused on civil society players during the 1990s and the resurgence of interest in international actors. A seminal effort to analyze these actors' efficacy was Peter Haas's groundbreaking work on epistemic communities. In other words, a "network of professionals with recognized expertise and competences in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to knowledge relevant to policy within that domain or issue-area".[25] In his early research, Haas made the point that the nations who supported the Mediterranean Action strategy the most were also those where the epistemic community was strongest. The strategy was designed to combat marine pollution in the Mediterranean Sea.[26] In fact, Haas has maintained throughout his career that the language of science is evolving into a

worldview that permeates politics globally and may thus have an impact on the definition of a state's interests. This would be particularly true in very complicated and ambiguous subject areas, albeit he acknowledged that politicians would need to request this information. Haas and colleagues' empirical investigations shown how the participation of epistemic communities may foster organizational learning by fostering the development of common understandings within their specialized sector, which in turn enhances state cooperation.[27]

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is arguably the most significant epistemic community in environmental politics over the past 20 years. Founded in November 1988 by a small group of well-known scientific specialists, its scientific evaluations are credited with starting most of the diplomatic movement on climate change and, at least in the 1990s, for changing the views of influential policy elites.[28] For instance, a thorough analysis of the United States' (USA) and the European Union's (EU) involvement in international negotiations revealed that, in contrast to the 1980s, the IPCC contributed to the establishment of a consensus among political elites and government officials that human activity was the primary cause of climate change. This was one of the reasons that the administration of President Clinton agreed to accept binding greenhouse gas emission targets in 1996 and part of the reason that then US Vice President Al Gore supported an agreement at Kyoto a year later[29].

Instead of concentrating on scientific knowledge and competence, some researchers have directed their attention toward "transnational advocacy networks," which are based on shared moral principles.[30] "Those relevant actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services," is what Keck and Sikkink define as a transnational advocacy network.[31] They contend that these networks are formed, for instance, when local players discover that their ability to influence a nation-state is restricted. Transnational advocacy networks rely on persuasion or socialization since they lack the typical strength of an advocacy network. This involves more than just debating opponents; it also involves applying pressure, bending arguments, pushing for punishments, and humiliating them. According to Keck and Sikkink, the sources of their impact include their persuasive tactics, which include the rapid flow of information, the framing of specific issues, the staging of symbolic events, the use of strong players as leverage, and the holding of nations accountable for their international obligations.[32] Crucially, Risse-Kappen's question—under what circumstances can advocacy networks have influence—was explicitly addressed by the study on transnational advocacy networks.[33] Five phases of network influence are identified by Keck and Sikkink[34]: problem generation and agenda framing; influence on states' and international organizations' discursive stances; impact on

institutional procedures; influence on target actors' policy changes; and influence on state behavior.

A significant portion of the subsequent study has looked into the effectiveness transnational advocacy networks have had when using various tactics in such circumstances. It has long been accepted that these networks have the greatest influence during the policy cycle's agenda-setting stage.[35] There is a lot of evidence in the field of environmental politics as well as other problem areas like trade and human rights to suggest that using strategic framing is an especially effective tactic in these situations.[36] For instance, Corell and Betsill have emphasized the significance of problem framing during the negotiating process in their research of international environmental agreements.[37] Others too have pointed to the success that environmental NGOs have had using such strategies during the early years of the international climate change negotiations[38].

But some academics have contended, following in the footsteps of the transnational relations literature, that because these actors are only important to the extent that they have an impact on state policies, research on epistemic communities and transnational advocacy networks is still bound to the state-centric perspective of the world. Paul Wapner, one of the main proponents of this viewpoint, contends that the idea of "world civic politics," in which activists try to alter circumstances without directly pushing governments, is the most useful lens through which to examine transnational activists.[39] He makes the case, for instance, that organizations like Greenpeace and the Sea Shepherds Conservation Society, which spearheaded anti-whaling campaigns, spread an ecological consciousness that permeates all facets of society and is not just limited to governments.

However, the majority of transnational actor research continues to concentrate on the interactions between state and non-state actors. This is further demonstrated by recent studies that highlight the proliferation of international collaborations in a number of issue areas, including biodiversity and climate change. Fundamentally, these collaborations signify "loose agreements between state and non-state actors on particular governance goals and on ways to further them beyond borders".[40] One such collaboration is the one to create the Amazon Regional Protected Areas, which was agreed upon by the World Bank and WWF. The range of actors involved in global environmental politics, both horizontally across networks of state and non-state actors and vertically across geographical and jurisdictional space, has led some to propose that we are seeing a "rescaling of global environmental politics"[41], even though there are still serious doubts about the environmental efficacy of some of these partnerships. It also demonstrates how far the literature on transnational actors has advanced beyond previous discussions on the necessity of switching from a state-centered to a society-dominated understanding of the world.

Individuals

The function of persons is far less articulated in the literature on transnational connections. However, as Bukarambe and Drahos point out, "we must still be wary of an institutional analysis of TNCs, states, NGOs and business organizations that treat them as institutional actors, writing their enrolment by individuals out of the script," even though individuals may not have the institutional power they did in feudal and early modern times.[42] Having said that, people are typically seen in the transnational literature as non-profit agents driven by the common good. In fact, a large portion of environmental politics research centers on how people interact with civil society organizations. For example, Tarrow[43] argues, in his work on transnational activists, that some of these individuals are "seeking the development of a global civil society or a world polity; but many others are people who are simply following their domestically formed claims into international society when these claims can no longer be addressed domestically". The experiences of activists like Chico Mendes, Wangari Maathai, and Ken Saro Wiwa demonstrate how they have used international networks to raise awareness of regional environmental issues. By doing thus, these people's actions may also have an impact on the standards and beliefs of international environmental politics.[44]

Individuals have a history of making significant worldwide interventions in environmental politics as transnational players. A common example of how individuals may support international efforts to address global environmental problems is the leadership of Mostafa Tolba, the former executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), during the ozone depletion negotiations.[45] Similarly, the scholarly literature pertaining to the Kyoto Protocol discussions is nearly unanimous in praising the contribution made by Argentinean Ambassador Estrada to the successful end of the negotiations. "The Estrada Factor," a portion in Oberthür and Ott's book on the discussions, asserts that "the outcome of the Kyoto process cannot be fully understood without paying tribute to Chairman Estrada".[46] His use of the gavel at crucial moments has also been praised by former American and European negotiators as "brilliant," with one saying that he "stitched together a deal all by himself, it was unbelievable".[47]

Not just the people in charge of international organizations have the capacity to have a significant role in cross-border relations. The growth of social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, along with the development of the Internet, have given regular people the ability to have an impact on international environmental politics. For instance, after the disastrous oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2020, many used Twitter, an online microblogging platform, to effectively publicly humiliate BP as the business attempted to quell the outcry. Other environmental organizations, like 350.org, which aims to create a global grassroots movement for climate change action, mainly rely on social media to connect people in order to exchange information, plan public gatherings, and put pressure on governments to

take action to lower greenhouse gas emissions. While some criticize social media for allowing people to do nothing more than click "like" to indicate support for a cause[48], there is no denying that these technologies are opening up new channels for people to influence others around the world than they did ten years ago.

However, researchers have mostly concentrated on international networks and will likely continue to do so, with the involvement of people inside these networks typically relegated to anecdotes. This is not to argue that people are inconsequential as international actors; rather, it only means that our understanding of the circumstances in which their efforts have been effective is significantly reduced. We now go back to our first broad inquiry.

What Circumstances Allow Transnational Actors to Affect Environmental Outcomes?

From the explanation above, it is possible to identify three broad groups of criteria that determine the effect of transnational actors. The "target state's" internal structure comes first. Transnational actors must be able to enter the target state's political system and help form "winning coalitions" within it to influence state policy. By this reasoning, it should be simpler for transnational players to get in touch with decision-makers and form alliances in a society that values pluralism and openness in the formulation of domestic policy.[49] For instance, environmental NGOs and commercial organizations have been very effective at infiltrating conventional policy networks to influence state policies in the comparatively open political systems of the USA and the EU. The Global Climate Coalition, among others, has demonstrated that this has been particularly clear throughout the history of the climate change debates.[50]

There is a limit to how much home circumstances may account for, though. For starters, they "cannot tell us why some transnational networks operating in the same context succeed and others do not," as stated by Keck and Sikkink in their argument.[51] Even though many academics have tried to solve this issue by examining norms and ideas—especially from a constructivist standpoint—it is evident that domestic circumstances are not the only factors that should be considered when evaluating the influence of transnational actors.[52]

This leads to the identification of a second set of international criteria in the literature. Empirical studies have demonstrated that transnational actors might be enabled by international regimes and institutions to establish coalitions and legitimize their attempts to shape policy outcomes. For instance, Risse-Kappen has maintained that state borders become increasingly porous for transnational operations the more a problem area is governed by international rules of cooperation. According to his assertion, "international governance structures that are highly regulated and cooperative tend to legitimize transnational activities, increase their access to national polities, and enhance their capacity to form 'winning coalitions'

for policy change".[53] Others have gone as far as to suggest that the access international regimes and agreements grant to networks may be as important as the content of the agreement itself.[54]

Encouraging access does not, however, guarantee influence, nor does it guarantee that transnational players' influence decreases as access grows more challenging. "We probably need to differentiate among various phases in the international policy cycle," as Larry Diamond notes.[55] Regarding this, it is generally agreed upon that, due to their ability to shape concepts and standards, transnational players have the most influence at the agenda-setting stage of the international policy cycle. Other circumstances that call for more inquiry have also been brought to light by studies in the field of environmental politics. For example, Barnett and Duvall[56] suggest that environmental NGOs could be more influential when the political stakes of an international negotiation are relatively low or, for instance, that environmental NGOs may have greater difficulty exerting influence when there is a high level of contention over entrenched economic interests. In the course of prolonged international environmental negotiations, these ideas have been taken further to suggest that there are strategic opportunities for highly networked actors to influence state behaviour depending on the elements of long negotiations.[57] A significant portion of this research also acknowledges that non-state actors should forge transnational coalitions, whether with states or other non-state actors, in order to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the "two-level game." The idea of a two-level game aims to explain how home politics affect talks on a global scale. It implies that domestic groups exert pressure on their governments at the national level to enact policies that they agree with, and that governments build coalitions among their constituencies in order to gain power. International governments aim to mitigate any unfavorable effects from overseas events while simultaneously caving in to local pressures.[58]

Third, the traits of transnational actors themselves will also moderate their effect, independent of the structural constraints of the home and international arena. As demonstrated by for-profit organizations like the WBSCD and non-profit organizations like Greenpeace, material resources and organizational qualities are undoubtedly crucial, but they are not the only factors that count. As we have seen with epistemic communities like the IPCC, the knowledge and experience of transnational players may be crucial in helping policy elites come to consensus on the nature of an issue.[59] Its influence, however, will also be influenced by the information requirements of other parties. Knowledge is perhaps a more potent tool in environmental politics especially, since many topics are marked by high levels of complexity and uncertainty. Furthermore, transnational actors will "operate best when they are dense, with many strong actors, strong connections among groups in the network, and reliable information flows," according to Downie and Fapohunda.[60]

Although this may be the case, more recent research has demonstrated that environmental NGOs' effect does not always rise when they coordinate.[61] More empirical study is required in this and other areas to identify the circumstances under which transnational actors affect environmental consequences.

Conclusion

Without a question, transnational actors have taken center stage in contemporary international politics. In the last forty years, people, groups, and for-profit companies have all contributed to shaping the current phase of international environmental politics. The question of whether transnational players are important or if society should take the place of a state-centered perspective on the world is no longer discussed in the literature on transnational actors. Rather, the interactions between state and non-state actors and their impact on both domestic and international results are the main focus of modern studies. This literature stands out in particular for its emphasis on networks: networks of environmental NGOs, commercial organizations, networks of scientific professionals, and cooperative partnerships between state and non-state entities, to mention a few. Accordingly, studies on transnational actors play a significant role in the debate over "governance without government"[62] and contribute to the argument put forth by some academics of international relations that phrases like "global governance" are more accurate than "international relations".[63]

As a result, a large portion of recent research focuses on the circumstances under which transnational players affect policy outcomes. Three broad categories of conditions can be distinguished, as this survey demonstrates: domestic conditions, which include the target state's political structure; international conditions, which include the function of international institutions; and, lastly, transnational actors' characteristics, which include their resources and network density. However, as other people have noted, the majority of empirical research that are now available are single case studies.[64] Comparing examples is necessary not just within environmental politics but also across other issue areas in order to apply lessons learned from other domains, including commerce and development, where transnational players play a significant role, to the field of global environmental politics.

As previously said, transnational actors are becoming a common sight in international politics, and curiosity in how they could contribute to the process of "democratizing global governance" is growing. A brief look through publications published in the previous several years in the domains of environmental politics, global governance, and international relations reveals this to be an expanding subject of study.[65] Since the main focus of this paper has been on transnational actors in environmental politics rather than transnational relations in general, this topic has not been addressed. However, considering that many researchers work under the

underlying assumption that transnational actors may contribute to democracy and that improved global governance is a prerequisite for their legitimacy, it is evident that the results of these discussions will be crucial for transnational actors. It appears likely that these debates will have particular resonance in the context of environmental politics, where international institutions are critical to addressing environmental problems, even though more normative and empirical work is needed before their potential role in democratizing global governance is settled.

Endnotes

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