

DISSERTATION
UNDERSTANDING GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY:
THEORY, GOVERNANCE AND THE GLOBAL WATER CRISIS

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ABSTRACT

UNDERSTANDING GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY:
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How does global civil society (GCS) fit in the history of world politics? Have technology and global capitalism liberated civil society from its former dependence on states and markets to develop into an autonomous and self-regulated sphere within the world political system? If not, perhaps recent developments really signal the emergence of new strategic opportunities for non-state actors to project their domestic political concerns onto the international agenda. Of course, there is also the possibility that GCS primarily functions to reinforce the privileged position of a hegemonic historic bloc, which rests at the confluence of dominant institutions, ideas, and material capabilities.

In the effort to answer how GCS fits in the history of world politics, this dissertation identifies and adjudicates the dominant theoretical accounts of GCS. This work rests on the observation that theoretical considerations of GCS have recently entered a new phase. Previously, GCS scholarship worked to build credibility in a field traditionally dominated by a state-centric view of world politics. The success of this initial phase is manifest in the inclusion of GCS into the political lexicon. Thus, what began as an effort to project the concept of GCS outward, in the

first phase, turned inward, in the second phase, to weigh the implications of this phenomenon for our understanding of world politics. The specific occasion for this dissertation project is the recent emergence, within the second phase, of three distinct theoretical positions. The primary goal of this dissertation is to adjudicate these theoretical claims.

Thus, this dissertation will appeal to a diverse audience, including international relations scholars, students of global civil society, and water policy experts. At its core this dissertation is concerned with the architecture of the world political system, the changes in this system over time, and the implications of these changes for our understanding of the power relations that both animate and hold this system together – topics that are central to the study of international relations. GCS offers an interesting way to explore these issues, not because its emergence is widely perceived as a new phenomenon in the history of world politics but rather because the very existence of GCS constitutes a potential threat to the core assumption in international relations that states are the dominant central actors within the world political system. For students of GCS, this dissertation offers advice for improving the theoretical development of their burgeoning field. To achieve this end, the dissertation examines the role GCS plays in the global governance of freshwater resources, weighing this evidence against the diverse and divergent theoretical expectations regarding the role GCS plays in the history of world politics. In the process, this analysis highlights the depth and diversity of GCS engagement in the global water crisis, which argues for the need to expand beyond the highly state-

centric and institutional approach that has thus far consumed the attention of water resource scholars and water policy experts.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

COC – Council of Canadians
GCI – Green Cross International
GCS – global civil society
NGO – non-governmental organization
UNEP – United Nations Environmental Programme
UNDP – United Nations Developmental Programme
PES – Payment for Ecosystem Services
USAID – United States Agency for International Development
TNC – The Nature Conservancy
WWC – World Water Council
WWF – Worldwide Fund for Nature

Chapter One: Framing the Research Question

Until recently, talk of global civil society (GCS) primarily occurred on the margins of a dominant state-centric approach to international relations. Most scholars held the view that states are the dominant actors in an anarchic world political system. They believed that the rules of sovereignty, including non-intervention and the exclusion of external authority, ordered this anarchic system (Krasner 2001). These scholars tended to define states as unitary actors, which means that all non-state actors were thought to be embedded within and accountable to a state or a collection of states. Scholars then explained changes in state behavior as the response to structural changes in the international system; any suggestion of influence by transnational non-governmental actors was merely written off as epiphenomenal (Risse-Kappen 1995).

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War thrust this state-centric perspective into a paradigmatic crisis. Scholars describing the events in post-Cold War Eastern Europe and Latin America recounted evidence of a new popular internationalism, which built new international linkages within civil society to establish bonds of transnational solidarity and reorient the social construction of knowledge (Drainville 2006; Kaldor 1991). By the early 1990s, additional evidence surfaced revealing dramatic growth in non-governmental organizations (NGO) at the international level (Lipschutz 1992). Before long, scholars attributed this phenomenon to the emergence of a “global civil society,” a term that initially described their empirical and

verifiable observations of increased social and political participation at the international level (Anheier, Glasius, and Kaldor 2001). It seemed that evidence of this phenomena was ubiquitous. Scholars identified instances of GCS in epistemic or knowledge-based communities (Haas 1992), in the formation of transnational environmental networks (Keck and Sikkink 1998a), in other issue oriented advocacy efforts, like peace and human rights (Kaldor 2003a), and the ecological work of non-governmental organizations (Wapner 1996). But perhaps the most compelling case for GCS appeared in studies of participation in international megaconferences and parallel NGO forums (Friedman, Hochstetler, and Clark 2005). For example, scholars made much of the fact that the 1992 Rio Conference on the Environment and Development included some 1,400 NGO representatives, a figure that was only eclipsed by the 18,000 NGOs representatives who attended the parallel forum (Carr and Norman 2008, 361). Before long, defenders of the old paradigm found this evidence difficult to ignore. For example, political realists Carothers and Barndt (1999, 20) acknowledged the growing influence of GCS in world politics, citing its ability to shape policy outcomes, generate citizen participation, and support leadership training. However, the authors also warned that GCS is at best an ambiguous space, which consists of a “bewildering array of the good, the bad, and the outright bizarre” (Carothers and Barndt 1999, 20).

These comments touch on two significant points of tension in GCS research. The first is the tension between the formative and more mature reflective phase of research. The goal in the formative phase of this research agenda had been to elevate the status of GCS within the discipline of international relations. In this sense, these comments signify the acceptance of GCS into the political lexicon and therefore mark a point of

transition in the history of GCS research. However, these comments also expose a degree of tension between the theoretical expectations for GCS and the empirical reality of transnational non-governmental behavior and influence. Throughout the formative stage, scholars made a number of theoretical propositions about the implications of GCS for world politics. As the pressure to gain credibility for GCS subsided, these propositions became the subjects of theoretical debate. Although theoretical concerns appear in the late 1990s (Gale 1998; Pasha and Blaney 1998), there is a discernable shift in the conversation by 2006 (Blaney and Inayatullah 2006; Chandler 2007; Scholte 2007). 2006 was noteworthy because it marked highpoints for global neoliberalism, American unilateralism, and the backlash against these forces in the form of global terrorism. For these and a host of other reasons, GCS research came into vogue among the growing ranks of political scholars who expressed frustration with the political *status quo*.

This attention led to a hardening of the theoretical perspectives on GCS into three discrete and prominent camps. These positions are elaborated in greater depth in chapter two. At this point it is worthwhile to note that contemporary divisions within the literature hinge on the positions each camp stakes out regarding the way GCS fits in the history of world politics. The first camp consists of *transformationalists* who argue that GCS marks an ontological break in the history of world politics, which is to say it constitutes an autonomous political sphere that is in the process of displacing states and markets as the dominant central forces in the world political system (Kaldor 2007; Lipschutz 2006b, 2007). *Pragmatists* identify the global expansion and diffusion of the strategic repertoire as the basis for its claim that GCS marks a political break in world political history (Betsill and Corell 2008; Hochstetler and Keck 2007). *Critical theorists*

argue instead that GCS marks an axiological break in the history of world politics, which is another way of saying that it tends to erode cultural diversity by projecting and reinforcing the perspectives and values of a global capitalist class (Blaney and Inayatullah 2010; Scholte 2007; Stevis 2005).

These debates are significant for a number of reasons, not the least of which has to do with the nature of political theorizing itself. In his history of political inquiry, Sheldon Wolin (2004, 4) argues that the purpose of political theory is to reflect “on matters that concern the community as a whole.” These deliberations over GCS are significant because they disrupt our traditional state-centric conceptions of what constitutes a community. The way we conceptualize this global public space therefore shapes public perceptions about the nature of authority, the status of certain goals as objectives for political action, and the character of political knowledge (Wolin 2004, 5). These theoretical considerations are significant as well for what they reveal about the nature of political critique. In his genealogy of political knowledge, Foucault (1977, 81) located the defining feature of contemporary political inquiry in the local character of political criticism. Foucault understood this to mean “an autonomous, non-centralized kind of theoretical production, one that is to say whose validity is not dependent on the approval of the established regimes of thought.” Viewed in this light, theoretical considerations of GCS mark “a return of knowledge” about the “ruptural effects of conflict and struggle that the order imposed by functionalist or systematizing thought is designed to mask” (Foucault 1977, 82). In short, considerations of GCS are not only significant because of *what* they study but, following Foucault, because of *how* they study it.

The purpose of this dissertation is to adjudicate this theoretical debate in order to elucidate *what* we are studying and *how* we should study it. Up to now, GCS has largely been whatever we made of it. Scholars have made it out to be a means of disrupting the existing political architecture of world politics, a way of democratizing global decision-making processes, and a mechanism for reinforcing the privileged position of a global elite. In sum, the literature leaves us with the impression that GCS is not in fact a single social formation but is instead a multiplicity of social spheres. Of course, Aristotle's law of non-contradiction alerts us to the fact that GCS cannot simultaneously perform all of these functions. That is, contradictory claims cannot apply to the same property at the same time in the same respect (Aristotle and Kirwan 1971). Thus, this dissertation grows out of a concern that the existing theoretical arrangement is unsatisfactory. The aim in adjudicating these competing perspectives is to establish which of the views on GCS is more basic than others, to retain these and discard those that are less satisfactory, so that we might return to our normal discourse on GCS with improved structure and understanding.

The remainder of this chapter builds toward the achievement of this objective. It is organized as follows. The next section introduces the methodology used to advance the research objectives. This discussion focuses specifically on the strengths and limitations of the case study method and offers a defense of the particular case study methodology applied in this dissertation. An introduction to the global water crisis follows this discussion. The argument in this section is that the global water crisis offers an interesting opportunity to assess the congruence of competing theoretical claims about GCS. In addition, this section identifies key points of variability within the GCS

response, which then forms the basis for a defense of the case study selection as well as the data collection and organization strategies. The chapter concludes by offering a summary of the key points and outlining the organizational strategy for the remainder of the dissertation.

Research Design

My thesis, then, is as follows: world politics grows more diverse and complex over time, and GCS is an integral part of this historic process. However, the problem is that we lack a satisfactory understanding of how it fits in the history of world politics. Recently, theoretical accounts of GCS have hardened into three discrete and incommensurable clusters of thought, which can be distinguished by their emphasis on the ontological, political, or axiological characteristics of GCS. Insofar as this marks an improvement over the more tentative and disorganized formative period of this theoretical enterprise, this theoretical development marks a step forward in our collective pursuit to understand recent changes within the world political system. Nevertheless, the current state of our understanding is ultimately unsatisfactory. The problem is that competing theoretical perspectives offer contradictory views on the ontological, axiological and political dimensions of GCS. Thus, further improvement in our theoretical understanding of GCS is not only desirable but also necessary.

Case Studies

In the effort to improve our theoretical understanding of GCS, this dissertation uses a case study approach to determine which of our theoretical beliefs about GCS are more basic than others. At first glance it may appear that the case study method is poorly suited for this type of research. In his analysis of the case study method, Gerring (2004,

350) argues, “general theories rarely offer the kind of detailed and determinate predictions on within-unit variation that would allow one to reject a hypothesis through pattern matching.” The problem is that a single case study or even a small collection of case studies simply cannot cross the empirical threshold required to definitively prove or disprove a theoretical proposition. However, such criticisms only apply to causal inferences, not inferences that are descriptive in nature, when the research objective values breadth over depth, or when the research design stresses causal effects over causal mechanisms (Gerring 2004). In contrast, the stated objective of this study is inherently descriptive: the goal is to improve our *conceptual* understanding of GCS. The stated purpose of this exercise is to gain greater *detailed* insight to the implications of these developments for our understanding of the world political system. Furthermore, it is the *mechanism* of these changes, identified here as GCS, that is the subject of this investigation.

In this dissertation NGOs are the focus on my investigation into GCS. This move is consistent with a literature that has a long tradition of framing NGOs as the vanguard of GCS (Reitan 2007). This is true of transformationalists, who interpret evidence of increased NGO cooperation in the transnational sphere as a sign of profound shifts in the architecture of the world political system (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, and Perraton 1999; Lipschutz and Mayer 1996). Pragmatists frequently credit NGOs with expanding and diffusing the strategic repertoire (Hochstetler and Keck 2007; Keck and Sikkink 1998a) and influencing the institutions of global governance (Betsill and Corell 2008). Likewise, critical theorists just as frequently highlight the normative perils of rising NGO engagement in the transnational sphere (Pasha and Blaney 1998). As the purpose of this

dissertation is to evaluate competing theoretical perspectives on GCS, the use of NGOs is therefore appropriate insofar as it allows for a more accurate assessment of these NGO-centric perspectives.

There are at least two ways to carry out a case study analysis. The first and most rigorous of these attempts to verify theoretical propositions through an in-depth analysis of *all* the intervening steps within a hypothesized “causal chain” (Goertz and Levy 2007). This *process-tracing* method assumes that the production of a given outcome involves more than the simple summation of two or more causal factors: the temporal and spatial contexts as well as the complex interactions of causal variables are also important. Because this methodology places a premium on context and process, it tends to be highly case-centered. In their effort to reveal the density of relationships between causal factors, researchers endeavor “to cover *every* significant step and *every* significant context factor for the process leading towards the outcome (without being able to invest a lot of theoretical reflections on every step)” (Blatter and Blume 2008, 335). The strength of this process-tracing method rests in its capacity to provide a more accurate understanding of isolated events by situating them within their particular temporal context (Blatter and Blume 2008). This degree of contextual specificity therefore makes this methodology well suited for verifying full-blown theories, that is, those theories that offer detailed accounts of the reasons, structures, mechanisms and motivations that link causes to effects. However, this also means that the process-tracing method is poorly suited for discriminating between internally coherent theoretical frameworks or evaluating theories that lack clarity and internal consistency (Blatter and Blume 2008; George and Bennett 2005).

For such occasions, the alternative *congruence* method is preferable. This method assesses the ability of a theory to explain or predict an outcome in a particular case in order to determine the relevance or relative strength of the theory for understanding/explaining the case under consideration. This method is often applied to narrow a theoretical field and/or refine theoretical models so that they can be subject to more rigorous testing under the process-tracing approach (George and Bennett 2005). Indeed, the main mechanism of control in this method is the rivalry between various theories (Blatter and Blume 2008). Because the congruence method relies on the discriminatory power of specific observations, it is highly theory-centered. The inferences it generates derive less from detailed empirical scrutiny than intensive reflection on the relationship between abstract concepts and concrete observations. This makes the congruence method particularly useful for analyzing social and political theories, the bulk of which lack the degree of clarity or internal consistency required to apply a more rigorous process-tracing method or quantitative method. The principal weakness of the congruence method is its inability to falsify theoretical propositions, as a determination of congruence or incongruence alone is methodologically insufficient to conclusively confirm or reject a hypothesized relationship between cause and effect. While the congruence method does not allow for the falsification of theoretical propositions, it does allow for determinations of theoretical strength and weakness, the purpose of which is to improve the structure and understanding of our theoretical discourse – to nudge the conversation closer to the point at which the application of a more rigorous methodological tool is justifiable.

Given its objective and the lack of clarity within the theoretical propositions under consideration, this dissertation adopts the theory-centered congruence method of case study analysis rather than the more rigorous and case-centered process-tracing approach. This decision imposed certain constraints on the dissertation project. The interpretive aspect of this methodology makes it incompatible with the central tenets of a mainstream positivism, which strictly uses empirical observation and measurement to uncover the laws or universal truths that conclusively explain the relationship between cause and effect. The congruence method simply lacks the degree of empirical rigor required to achieve verifiable, accurate and consistent observations. Not only is the number of cases too small to support such generalizations but the degree of analytical detail is insufficiently rigorous to guard against the possibility of false positives. The congruence method is also insufficiently sensitive to conclusively determine which causal factors are significant; therefore, the data generated by this methodology do not provide strong enough evidence to generalize across cases because this data alone is insufficient to guard against the possibility of a false negative. The primary purpose and strength of the congruence approach then is not that it tests theories per se, but rather that it offers a means of refining these theories if possible so that they can be tested under more rigorous methods in the future (George and Bennett 2005). Thus, the congruence method is best suited to producing generalizations about the theoretical discourse and not the wider population of cases these theories describe (Blatter and Blume 2008).

Global Water Crisis

In the application of this congruence methodology, this dissertation focuses on a particular sphere or subset of GCS activity associated with the global water crisis. There

are at least three key reasons this issue offers an interesting opportunity to assess the congruence of competing theoretical claims over GCS. The first and most obvious of these is that water is essential to life. Water is not substitutable, which means that once a resource has been depleted or polluted that is it, there is no viable alternative. Consequently, the excessive use and abuse of water resources tends to generate the kind of intensely impassioned and widespread response within civil society that is oftentimes lacking in issue areas like global climate change or deforestation, for which the threat to human life is calculated in years not days. Second, the traditional conception of water resource problems as discrete and local matters has undergone a deep and widespread transformation. Today, more and more people perceive their local water resource issues as part of a global governance crisis (Conca 2006; FOEI 2003; Gleick, Wolff, Chalecki, and Reyes 2002; IUNC 2000; Postel 1997; UN 2006; WWAP 2006, 2009). When we combine these first two points, what we have is an issue that elicits the most intense passions, passions that are not just directed toward their local or state governing structures but are increasingly focused on the rules, norms and decision-making procedures that make up the global governance of freshwater resources. These developments have most clearly been manifest in a dramatic increase in global water-related activity by non-governmental organizations (Balanyá 2005; Conca 2006; Finger and Allouche 2002b). However, these NGOs have not merely been content to pressure for reforms in the rules and norms of global water governance; many have begun to take matters into their own hands by undertaking ecological work or attempting to reconfigure widespread perceptions, preferences and values on water resource issues.

Finally, the global water crisis is interesting because few scholars pay much attention to the role that GCS plays in this story. Instead, most water resource scholars remain spellbound by a traditional state-centric approach to global water resource problems (Saleth and Dinar 2004; Wescoat and White 2003a). Global water resource scholarship has offered important insights to the political dimensions of transboundary issues (Blatter and Ingram 2001; Mumme 1988, 1993; Vogtmann and Dobretsov 2005) and the water-related concerns associated with environmental security (Cossi 1993; Pearce 2006; Ward 2002) but it has been virtually silent the important role GCS plays in story of global water governance. Therefore, the global water crisis is interesting both because it offers an opportunity to adjudicate theoretical differences over GCS and because this research objective promises to bridge a widening gap in the literature on global water governance.

Case Selection

Using transnational NGOs as a way of evaluating competing claims about GCS, this dissertation endeavors to push beyond the state-centric approach in order to advance a more sophisticated and coherent understanding of global water governance. Whereas states tend to focus on law and order approaches to water resource problems, or, to borrow a phrase from Foucault, “the right disposition of things” (Foucault 1994a, 234), NGOs can pursue alternative political objectives and employ a wider range of strategic tools in the pursuit of these objectives. States simply face a number of structural constraints that are not as significant for NGOs. For example, state governments are theoretically accountable to their citizens and are therefore expected to consider and reconcile a multiplicity of interests and perspectives in the course of their decision-

making processes. Governments also face territorial constraints, which limit their ability to shape water policies beyond their political territorial boundaries. In contrast, NGOs' effectiveness increases in proportion to their degree of specialization. This specialization derives both from their knowledge about a particular issue (Betsill and Corell 2008) and the interpretive lens they use to filter this knowledge (Luke 1996; Pasha and Blaney 1998). Thus, there is a strong incentive for an NGO to set aside or ignore issues that fall beyond its area of expertise, just as there is an incentive for NGOs to prevail over alternative interpretations of the data/problem. In large part, it is their skill on both fronts that determines their success as an organization. Another point of difference is the fact that territorial considerations pose less of a constraint on NGO behavior. Recent advances in communication and transportation technologies have made it possible for NGOs to capitalize on the comparative advantage they hold over states, which is evident in the recent growth of multinational and transnational NGO activity (Eschle and Stammers 2004; Held and McGrew 2000; Reitan 2007; Warkentin 2001).

Although many water-related transnational NGOs share many of these fundamental characteristics, there are also fundamental differences in the way they value water. Some value water as an environmental good, others value it as a public good, and still others see it as an economic good. Like all attempts at classification, this categorical scheme, if pressed, would likely appear to be manufactured and absurd. However, insofar as it contains a degree of truth, this classification scheme offers a solid foundation upon which to base a theoretical comparison, and therefore it offers a starting point for genuine investigation (Berlin 1986). In addition to serving this investigative function, highlighting this variability also functions as a safeguard against the kind of case

selection bias that has become all too common within the literature on GCS (Keck and Sikkink 1998a; Wapner 1996). Like all political domains, GCS is a site of political contestation, where actors with different values and interests struggle against one another in the effort to advance their particular agenda. In the effort to improve our understanding of the way GCS fits in world politics it is also necessary therefore to investigate the internal struggles for power that animate GCS.

To capture this variability, this dissertation selected the most prominent NGO within each cohort of like-minded actors. This selection process began with a soaking and poking investigative strategy, which involved a broad initial analysis of water-related transnational NGO actors and the categorization of these actors according to the value they inscribe on water. Case studies were then selected from each cohort on the basis of their prominence within the group. Three factors were selected to determine prominence: the level of global water related activity; success in articulating and advancing water initiatives; and material and cultural capabilities. As a practical matter, the wealth and availability of water-related documentation was also a significant but less important factor.

Those who value water as an environmental good do so out of a fundamental concern for ecosystem integrity and biodiversity. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) ranks among the most prominent members of this cohort, which also includes the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Global Nature Fund. These actors hold the view that water possesses intrinsic value, which means it possesses value that is independent of any instrumental worth humans might recognize. This view is informed by the ecological political philosophy of ecocentrism. This philosophy rejects the Western enlightenment

view that humans stand apart from nature, arguing instead that humans constitute a single strand in the complex web of life (Naess 1995). As freshwater resources play a vital role in sustaining life in all its forms, ecocentrics contend that water/nature and the self are as one. Thus, we should not only incorporate the needs of nature into our water-related decision-making processes but we should prioritize those needs. For it is only by saving nature that we can continue to sustain ourselves (Rolston III 1996). Historically, TNC advanced this ecocentric agenda through its ecological work, which took a direct approach to the challenge of preserving ecosystem integrity through its buy and protect strategy. However, its growing interest in global water resource problems has had two key effects. First, TNC has played a more direct role in trying to interrupt and transform widespread preferences, perceptions and values of water resources, specifically, and water resource governance, more generally. Second, TNC has made some initial attempts to reconfigure the rules, norms and decision-making procedures that make up global water governance. This effort is most clearly manifest in its involvement in creating and promoting the Brisbane Declaration, which calls upon states and water managers to incorporate environmental needs into their decision-making processes.

Organizations that value water as a public good stress the importance of democratic decision-making and the satisfaction of basic human needs. Among this cohort, the Council of Canadians (COC) holds a place of prominence among such organizations as Friends of the Earth International, the Sierra Club, and Red Vida. This position emerged in response to growing pressure by the World Bank, the IMF, and others to privatize water resource management. Those who take a public goods position argue that water resource problems are the consequence of undemocratic decision-

making procedures that privilege the satisfaction of short-term interests in economic gain over the long-term interests of individuals and communities. Privatization merely exacerbates the problem by further consolidating decision-making authority in the hands of multinational corporations, whose primary objective is not the long-term satisfaction of basic human needs but rather immediate desire of shareholders for ever greater profits. Public goods advocates also take issue with the commodification of water, which tends to cheapen the cultural and spiritual values people often inscribe on water. As a group, their preferred solution to the global water crisis is one that enshrines the principle of water as a human right in national and international law. It is on this front that the COC stands out among its cohort as a clear leader in the effort to transform the rules, norms and decision-making procedures of global water governance.

Those who value water as an economic good focus on the problems of allocation inefficiency and the supply-demand disequilibrium. Green Cross International (GCI) has taken the most innovative approach to advancing this agenda, which ranks it above other like-minded organizations, such as the World Water Council and the International Secretariate for Water. What these actors share in common is the view that water possesses economic value in all its competing uses. Viewed from this perspective, the fundamental problem driving global water governance is the continued “failure to place a price on water that reflects its economic value in its various alternative uses” (Winpenny 2003, 1). This failure is blamed for wasteful and environmentally damaging use, resource misallocation, and low levels of international investment flows to the water sector. To solve this problem, advocates support full-cost pricing, retracting government activity to the regulatory realm, and privatizing day-to-day management of water

resources. Subjecting water to market pressures is viewed as the most efficient way to convey information about the degree of resource scarcity, thereby promoting water resource conservation and the allocation of water resources to their most valuable uses (Naiman, et al. 2002). The benefits of full-cost pricing might also include greater equity, as “higher rates allow utilities to extend services to those not currently served and those currently forced to purchase water from vendors at very high prices” (Naiman, et al. 2002, 2). GCI’s support for commodification derives from its overarching desire to interrupt the parochial sensibilities that spawn destructive behavior and replace these with a deep awareness of global solidarity.

In this dissertation, cases are the not objects of inquiry; rather, they serve an instrumental function by shedding light on the relevance and relative strength of competing theoretical expectations about GCS. Put differently, the goal is not to provide a more accurate *description* of the pieces but rather to provide a more accurate *explanation* of how these pieces fit together. This goal focuses our attention on the macro relationships between abstract theories and concrete observations, as opposed to the alternative focus of process-tracing methodology, which highlights the micro relationships among the causal variables within a particular case or event (Blatter and Blume 2008). The instrumental value of these cases is magnified even further by the reduction of each theoretical framework to its conceptual core. This means that this dissertation does not endeavor to precisely weigh and measure every proposition associated with a particular theoretical framework but focuses instead on the core proposition that defines each theoretical perspective. Consequently, the use of case

studies focus specifically on the goal of illuminating the empirical relevance of these core theoretical propositions.

Organization

The point of chapter two is to explore the overarching research question in greater depth and identify the core propositions that animate theoretical debates on this question. This chapter makes three main points: (1) GCS has recently emerged as a significant feature on the landscape of world politics; (2) theoretical accounts of this development recently hardened into three incommensurable positions and what delineates these positions is the stress each places on the ontological, political or axiological characteristics of GCS; (3) Aristotle's law of non-contradiction dictates that these three theoretical perspectives cannot be true at the same time, thus, additional analysis of this question is not only desirable but necessary. Apart from point three, the evidence for this chapter derives from the theoretical literature on GCS. The purpose here is not to provide an exhaustive literature review but rather to shed light on the key points of tension or difference than animate theoretical debates.

This preliminary theoretical analysis in chapter two segues into an overview of the global water crisis in chapter three. This chapter argues that the global water crisis offers an interesting opportunity to adjudicate the theoretical debates revealed in chapter two. To this end, this chapter makes three key points. First, it summarizes the modern history of global water governance to show that intensifying global water resource problems are primarily a crisis of governance. We have the skill and technological capability to solve most water resource problems, what we lack is the political will. The second point is that this global water crisis has been manifest in three distinct ways. It

has been manifest as an environmental problem, a humanitarian problem, and an economic problem. By outlining the depth and breadth of each dimension, this section introduces the reader to the severity of this issue and adds weight to the point made earlier in the chapter regarding the principled origins of variability within the GCS approach to the global water crisis. The third and final point reveals the depth of GCS engagement on this issue, which serves both to illustrate the relevance of this subject for GCS research as well as the relevance of GCS to our understanding of the global water crisis.

Chapters four through six present the concrete empirical evidence through cases study analyses. As the purpose of these cases is to establish the relevance and relative strength of the competing theoretical perspectives, each case study focuses on four principal areas.

Background: What are the organization's origins? What purpose was the organization designed to serve? What is the nature of its organizational structure? How does the organization make decisions and to whom is it accountable? What is the nature of its involvement in the global water crisis? When did it take an interest in this issue and why?

Political Ontology: How does the organization perceive its role in world politics? How does it make sense of the world political system? In other words, what does the organization perceive the world political system to be made of? How does it describe the general principles that govern the functioning of the world political system? And finally, what is the organization's view on the separation of appearance and reality? In other words, to what extent does it believe the social and political world presents itself as it really is? (Hay 2006).

Values: What are the core values that govern the organization? To what extent have these values changed over time? If changes have occurred, what prompted these changes? How does the organization value water? How does its concern for water fit within the context of its overarching values? How does the organization rank order its values? In other words, which values does it tend to privilege over others?

Strategy: What are the strategies the organization employs in the pursuit of its objectives? To what extent do these strategies correspond to its values/political ontology? Have these strategies changed over time, and if so why? How successful are its strategies in achieving their short-term and long-term objectives? Who or what are the objects of its water-related activities? With whom does the organization frequently partner in the pursuit of its objectives? Is the organization strategically innovative?

To gather this data this dissertation relied heavily on document analysis. I compiled documents from organizational websites, newsletters and other membership publications, reports, and historical records including meeting minutes and memoirs. I supplemented these materials with monographs by organizational leaders, videos featuring organizational personnel, podcasts and video lectures, radio interviews, as well as journal and newspaper articles. When gaps or points of contradiction appeared I contacted key organizational personnel for clarification. Because this communication took place through email, the respondents had time to formulate thoughtful replies, which, with one exception, proved helpful in filling the necessary gaps and clarifying key points. These multiple layers of material allowed for the construction of rich and descriptive narratives on which to base the congruence analyses that followed.

The process of congruence analysis is like pattern matching. The analytical challenge consists in matching the concrete empirical data with the abstract theoretical expectations about that data. The overarching goal is then to find points of complementarity and difference and to then use these findings to make inferences about the relevance and relative strengths of the competing theoretical frameworks. Chapter two develops these theoretical positions in detail, and identifies their key assertions and expectations. These points serve as the theoretical basis for pattern testing with the

empirical data to determine how well these expectations fit what we see happening within GCS.

Whereas the case study chapters compare the strength of the theories in relation to the empirical data, chapter seven compares the strengths of the theories in relation to each other. The purpose of the final exercise is to reveal which of our theoretical perceptions are more basic than others, to discard those that appear weak or unsatisfactory and keep the rest so that we can return to our theoretical deliberations over GCS with improved structure and understanding. This analysis rests upon the ability of these theoretical perspectives to generate accurate predictions. To be absolutely clear, this is not the same thing as verifying or falsifying a theoretical claim. This methodology relies on inferences of relative strength rather than claims of absolute and universal truth. Chapter seven concludes by offering reflections on the project and proposals for future research.

Chapter Two: The Theoretical Debate On Global Civil Society

Chapter one located global civil society (GCS) on the scene of world political history. It argued that nothing is more central to the history of world politics than the emergence, over time, of diversity and complexity. It went on to argue that GCS plays an important role in this historic development. This chapter builds on these findings to show that this phenomenon, evident and undisputed as it is as a matter of fact, is nonetheless subject to energetic debate about what is going on, an empirical matter with deeper theoretical implications.

What makes this debate compelling is that it disrupts a previous phase of theoretical inquiry in which theoretical progress appeared obvious and assured. The difference between these phases consists in the absence, in the previous phase, “of competing schools that question each other’s aims and standards” (Kuhn 1970, 163). The previous phase consisted almost entirely in gathering sufficient evidence to prove that GCS exists. In contrast, the success of this endeavor gave to way to new concerns for the way GCS relates to the other elements of world politics, for its functions, and its implications for the attainment of normative goals. While theoretical progress continues in this current phase, it is harder to see. The issue, therefore, is not the absence of progress but rather the “effectiveness and efficiency with which the group as a whole solves new problems” (Kuhn 1970, 164). The energy these theorist channel towards

considerations of fundamental principles is energy that might otherwise be directed towards solving the multiplicity of problems a new paradigm would expose.

To solve a puzzle of theoretical effectiveness, everything depends on the accurate identification of the points of tension that animate theoretical debate. These tensions and contradictions later function as the objects of analysis, for which the challenge is to determine which of these beliefs or propositions is more basic than the others so that we can discard the rest and return to our discourse on GCS with improved structure and understanding.

It is on this preliminary point that this dissertation breaks from previous attempts to solve the theoretical debates over GCS. With some exceptions, scholars have tended to negotiate this research terrain by mapping out its ontological, political, *or* axiological dimensions. By zeroing in on just one of these variables, these scholars categorized theoretical frameworks according to whether or not they perceive GCS as an autonomous and self-directed political sphere (Chandhoke 2002), a force of democratization (Omelicheva 2009), or a vehicle of human emancipation (Frost 2002). In contrast, this chapter presents an alternative categorization that grants these ontological, political, *and* axiological elements equal weight. Taking all three characteristics into consideration provides a more accurate and coherent understanding of the tensions and contradictions that animate theoretical discussions of GCS. Therefore, this approach promises both to improve our understanding of the variability within GCS research and, subsequently, to enhance the accuracy of our assessments of theoretical congruence.

The chapter unfolds in three stages. The first stage provides an overview of the theoretical literature on GCS. This discussion highlights the points of agreement about

GCS that make it possible to describe this theoretical endeavor as a coherent yet fragmented body of work. The second stage focuses squarely on the points of difference. Here, the discussion turns to the ontological, political, and axiological positions that animate theoretical debates over GCS. These are not subtle issues; rather, the emphasis placed on these issues signifies a reconstruction of the field of international relations from new fundamentals, “a reconstruction that changes some of the field’s most elementary theoretical generalizations as well as many of its . . . methods and applications” (Kuhn 1970, 85). The third stage references Aristotle’s law of non-contradiction to argue that further theoretical reduction is both desirable and necessary.

Global Civil Society: What is it and why is it important?

Although considerations of a universal civil society date to Kant, modern iterations first appeared in post-Cold War Eastern Europe and Latin America. Fearing the harmful effects of an ascendant global liberalism, scholars looked to GCS as a countervailing force (Kaldor 2003b). More recently, GCS developed into a key variable for tracking trends in the diversity and complexity of world politics.

Put simply, civil society is the sphere of association that lies between the personal and the public. Dominant traditional considerations located civil society in opposition to and separate from the state (Hegel and Knox 1942). What changed, in addition to and as an advent of new powerful transportation and communication technologies, was the surge of transnational non-governmental activity described in chapter one. Almost overnight, local actors perceived new global dimensions to the problems they faced and the interests they pursued. Before long, they appropriated the mechanisms of global capitalism to solve their problems and advance their interests. This development has been manifest in

a recent surge of transnational non-governmental activity, the result of which has been a dramatic increase in the complexity and diversity of world politics (Mason 2008; Reitan 2007).

Few would dispute these observations. Given this basic degree of consensus, how then can we explain the mounting theoretical debate over GCS? First, research on GCS focuses our attention on the social and political implications of economic and technological globalization. This line of inquiry tends to cluster around two areas. The first area looks at the effects of economic and technological developments on the construction of preferences, perceptions and values, particularly as these relate to the formation of political identity and perceptions of imagined community (Dower 2003; Held 1995; Keane 2001). The second area of research examines the extent with which these economic and technological changes open new opportunities for contentious non-governmental activity within the world political system. Authors working within this tradition assert that globalization modifies the rules, norms and decision-making procedures of world politics, thereby improving the prospects for transnational non-governmental activity (Keck and Sikkink 1998b; Tarrow and McAdam 2005; Tilly 2004).

A second and more normative approach uses GCS to explain perceived changes in the world political system. This line of inquiry also contains two camps. The first camp explores GCS as a normative concept, which is to say that theorists think of GCS as a political project or ideal type (Anheier, et al. 2001; D. Della Porta and S. Tarrow 2005; Lipschutz 1992). To a certain extent, this approach insulates this group from contradictory empirical findings. A second approach characterizes GCS as an actually observable set of empirical phenomena. Within this context, research looks for trends in

the behavior and perceptions of actors within GCS in order to determine the extent with which these characteristics are consistent with or serve the interests of traditional sites of power in the world political system (Blaney and Inayatullah 2010; Cox 1999; Rosenau 1992).

In each case, the recent debate over GCS flows from two underlying sources; the first is ideological, the second empirical. Viewed from an ideological perspective, research on GCS offers a constructive outlet for scholars frustrated by the failures and limitations of the state system. States are the dominant and central powers in the world political system and therefore the solutions to transnational or global problems continue to depend on national policies. However, insecurities often prevent states from acting in ways that advance the global common good. More often than not, the fear of being systemically disadvantaged overwhelms other desires. Frustrated by this status quo, scholars have looked to GCS as a means of interrupting and altering this structural condition. Here the term “structure” signifies the rules, norms and decision-making procedures that coordinate behavior in a particular issue area.

Power plays a critical role in this storyline. I understand power to be the measure of an actor’s probability of achieving a preferred outcome (Lamborn 1990). Power ultimately rests on the ability to leverage capabilities, including military force, wealth and knowledge. Therefore, structural change results from the redistribution of capabilities across units (Waltz 1979, 108). What GCS offers scholars then is a conceptual alternative to the monistic presumptions of a state-centered world order, the function of which is to preserve the status quo by foreclosing the possibility of constructing a pluralist and democratic world political system. Theoretical considerations of GCS

challenge this rationalist thesis of a world political system by shining light on the diversity of individuals, organizations and structures that make up and animate the history of world politics.

GCS therefore reopens the possibility of democracy on a global scale. That is, the process of developing a system in which the governors are accountable to the governed. Put simply, democratization is a central concern within the GCS literature because there is a deficit of democratic accountability in the transnational sphere. Accounts of this deficit tend to highlight the recent proliferation of international institutions, globe trotting bureaucrats, and transnational corporations, on one hand, and the lack of a proportionate expansion in accountability mechanisms and standards, on the other (Mason 2008, 28; Rosenau 1992; Susan Strange 1995). As this governance arrangement is widely perceived as the projection of powerful state and class interests (Cox 1997; Hardt and Negri 2000), GCS scholars agree that the initiative to improve democratic accountability must take root somewhere else. Consequently, many authors have looked to GCS as a potential means of overcoming this democratic deficit at the national and transnational levels (Etzioni-Halevy 2002; Pratt 2004; Rohrschneider and Dalton 2002).

GCS performs this task when it enhances transparency, conducts policy monitoring and review, pursues redress for marginalized stakeholders, and promotes formal accountability (Scholte 2004, 201). It also performs this function when it empowers marginalized people to acquire their fair share of public goods and a secure place in healthy ecosystems (Wapner 1996; Wescoat and White 2003b). Put differently, GCS enacts democratic reforms when it expands the struggle “against the distribution of the public and the private that shores up the twofold domination of the oligarchy in the

State and in society” (Rancière and Corcoran 2006, 55). Viewed from this perspective, the most pressing problem for students of GCS lies in uncovering the potential of the multitude to organize itself against the global forces of domination and construct an alternative to the capitalist imperatives that underwrite their authority (Hardt and Negri 2004b, 189).

As an empirical matter, the notion of a GCS is powerful because it offers a compelling explanation for the profound changes already underway in the world political system. These changes are fundamentally political in nature because they involve the ongoing struggle over the distribution of benefits and risks associated with capitalist production. In this context, capitalism is understood as a holistic concept entailing the production of communications, relationships and forms of life – as well as the production of material goods (Hardt and Negri 2004a, xv). The novelty of contemporary struggles is that they increasingly spill beyond local and national boundaries to become the subjects of global debate. Technology fuels this process by lowering the barriers to trans-boundary communication and transportation, thereby opening new strategic opportunities for political action (Held and McGrew 2002; Keck and Sikkink 1998a).

A growing number of non-governmental actors have capitalized on these opportunities by expanding the scope of their interests and activities, establishing new coalitions, and generally improving their credibility as authorities in their particular areas of interest. So armed, they have worked to leverage these capabilities in such a way as to increase the probability of achieving their preferred outcomes. In some cases, a desirable outcome may involve the modification of specific local or national policies (Hochstetler 2002; Keck and Sikkink 1998a). In other instances, the preferred outcome is one that

involves a change in international rules, norms or decision-making processes (Betsill and Corell 2008; Haas 1992). Yet another possibility is that what they desire most is the preservation of the status quo (Lipschutz 2007; Pasha and Blaney 1998). This discussion makes clear that the recent explosion of transnational non-state activity has raised new questions about its real and potential implications for the distribution and function of power in the world political system. The concept of GCS offers scholars the fundamental theoretical tools to answer these pressing questions.

Global Civil Society and the Theoretical Debate

Thus far, observations of GCS, although widely accepted as empirical fact, have generated different interpretations of its relevance for the history of world politics. Some perceive the emergence of GCS as an ontological break in this historical process (Kaldor 2003b; Keane 2001; Lipschutz 1992; Wapner 2002). Those who hold this view perceive power as a finite quantity. Consequently, as GCS burst onto the scene of world politics, the perception is that it did so at the expense of states and markets, in effect de-centering the roles these actors play in the domain of global governance. An alternative view is that GCS marks a political break in the history of world politics. This theoretical perspective argues that the rise of GCS is significant because it contributes to the expansion and diffusion of the global strategic repertoire (Betsill and Corell 2008; Keck and Sikkink 1998a). These scholars tend to perceive power as an unbounded and therefore unlimited quantity. Thus, while they sometimes advocate for contentious political strategies (Hochstetler 2002; Tilly 2004), they have a tendency to favor cooperative solutions in which all parties win (Kenny 2004). The final camp perceives GCS as an axiological break in world politics. In their view, GCS primarily functions as

a means of projecting the interests and values of the dominant global class, thereby reducing the diversity of values and cultural understandings in the world political system (Blaney and Inayatullah 2006; Inayatullah and Blaney 2004; Newell 2008). The concern here is not the scope of power but its distribution. This scholarship rests on a normative preference for the just distribution of power, which means a distribution of power that benefits the poor and disempowered.

Before it is possible to evaluate these positions in greater detail, it is necessary to first provide some clarification as to what is meant by *ontology, politics and axiology*. In this context, ontology “relates to *political being*, to what *is* politically, to what *exists* politically, and to the units that comprise political reality” (Hay 2006, 80). Another way to think of ontology is as a systematic process of compartmentalization, which serves as the basis for diachronic and synchronic analysis (C. Taylor 1959). These ontological considerations constitute the foundation of political theorizing and analysis, whether the reference to ontology is explicit or not. Ontological debates tend to revolve around the composition of a particular compartmental scheme, the justifications marshaled in defense of the scheme, and/or the implications of observed variability within the system. As such, they cover a wide range of topics, actors, and processes. For example, scholars such as Wapner (1996), Rosenau (1992, 2002), Kaldor (1999, 2007), Keane (2003) and Keck and Sikkink (1998b) generally agree that GCS contains transnational humanitarian and environmental non-governmental organizations (NGO). However, these same scholars tend to disagree about whether GCS also includes hybrid entities like the World Water Council, whose membership rolls include governments, multilateral institutions, and market actors.

Politics describes the struggle for power. However, in this context politics is all about the strategies that actors employ in the course of their efforts to gain power. It describes the efforts of private individuals who struggle to intervene “in the sphere of international policy and strategy” (Foucault 1984, 65). Politics focuses attention on the identification and distribution of capabilities, the skill with which different actors leverage these capabilities within a particular situational context, and the extent with which these activities enhance their degree of influence within this context. Political interests in GCS tend to emphasize the role of strategic innovation and the diffusion of the strategic repertoire. Consequently, these discussions tend to highlight the production of information/knowledge, access to decision-makers and decision-making processes, and the tactics used to convey information/knowledge (Betsill and Corell 2008).

When describing global civil society, axiology refers to the values scholars *inscribe* upon global civil society. These values are both intrinsic and instrumental and range from certain innate values, such as the value of moral diversity – the strength of which flows from the inclusion of competing and indeed conflicting values (D. Della Porta and S. Tarrow 2005), to instrumental values that signify the capacity of GCS to extend and deepen these intrinsic values (Sikkink 2005). Whereas claims of intrinsic value are more or less normative assertions, the determination of instrumental value is an empirical endeavor. As an empirical enterprise, scholars have observed and measured the extent with which GCS “straddles the whole earth, and [has] complex effects that are felt in its four corners . . . with the deliberate effect of drawing the world together in new ways” (Keane 2003, 8). In other instances, scholars have measured instrumental value by mapping the flow of information and ideas (Keck and Sikkink 1998a). Still others have

evaluated global trends in the frequency of “uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values” (CCS 2004). Axiological debates over global civil society tend to break out over particular assertions of intrinsic value, the desirability of extending and deepening commitments to these values, as well as the configuration of opportunities and constraints that determine the potential for civil society to expand into transnational space (Comor 2001; Pasha and Blaney 1998; Stevis 2005).

These points of tension have been manifest in three distinct theoretical interpretations of the way GCS fits in world politics. Respectively, these are the transformationalist, pragmatic, and critical positions. Each of the following sections identifies the central conceptual claims and theoretical propositions of these camps in turn. To be clear, this analysis is not exhaustive: it makes no attempt to capture the entire constellation of theoretical positions on GCS. Instead, the aim here is to identify the most prominent theoretical positions within the literature as a first step in a systematic assessment of their congruence to the concrete empirical data on GCS. A theoretical perspective gains prominence when it is both durable and popular.

The Transformationalist Thesis

The most controversial and optimistic of the three theoretical frameworks, these theorists argue that GCS fundamentally transforms the world political system by de-centering the state as the single most dominant force within the system (Lipschutz 1992). Much of the work produced by this position is highly normative, which is to say that it stakes out a position on what states and individuals *ought* to do. In this respect, the transformationalist argument is largely immunized from empirical attacks. However, the fact that these normative propositions are theoretical abstractions of certain empirical

observations means that the transformationalist position can be subject to empirical analysis and critique.

In order to assess the theoretical effectiveness of this position we must understand that this perspective grows out of the observation that the international political system of states has failed to manage and control the global financial system, protect the environment, or preserve the socio-economic balance between the powerful and the weak (Strange 1999). Paul Wapner (1996, 18) concludes, “the state system, as the context within which states operate, impose constraints that render states incapable of working for genuine global well-being.” If true, these observations lead ultimately to the conclusion that the state bias of traditional international relations theory must be modified so as to accommodate alternative governance mechanisms. The traditional approach describes the world political system as a complex of unitary states, whose relations are determined by power insecurities and the strict calculation of immediate self-interest. However, the deepening of global humanitarian, environmental and security problems shows “there is a real possibility of choice between doing what is right and doing what is in one’s own interests” (Dower 2007, 8). For students of world politics, the challenge, then, is to find a way to “motivate agents, even in the face of conflicting interests” (Dower 2007, 9). For transformationalists, meeting this challenge requires “the transformation of the state, the emergence of a new kind of global politics in which the state is one actor among many; and this in turn has profound consequences for the content and functioning of democracy” (Kaldor, Anheier, and Glasius 2004, 1).

In its axiological propositions, the transformationalist thesis has undergone a significant change of its own. It began by inscribing GCS with a set of progressive,

intrinsic values and asserted that its instrumental effects on the world political system were wholly positive. To support this claim, transformationalists highlighted the concept of civility, attributing to GCS certain “common norms or codes of behaviour that have emerged in reaction to the legal and other socially constructed fictions of the nation-state system” (Lipschutz 1992, 398). De Oliveira and Tandon (1994, 2-3) expanded on this observation to include among its norms and behaviors the “solidarity and compassion for the fate and well-being of others, including unknown, distant others, a sense of personal responsibility and reliance on one’s own initiative to do the right thing; the impulse toward altruistic giving and sharing; the refusal of inequality, violence, and oppression.” It is no surprise, then, that transformationalists were equally optimistic about the instrumental value of GCS, for, in the diversity and complexity of GCS, they perceived the power to shape new identities (Keane 2001), to alter people’s minds and actions throughout the world (Wapner 1996), to broaden and strengthen cosmopolitan law (Kaldor 2003b), and to reconstruct, re-imagine, or re-map world politics (Lipschutz 1992).

At the same time, criticism of this perspective prompted at least some transformationalists to mute these axiological propositions. For example, in its inscription of intrinsic value scholars have retreated from their claims of altruism to emphasize instead its dynamism, inclusiveness, and cognizance (Warkentin 2001). These terms, new in the transformationalist discourse, reveal efforts made to address their critics: dynamism signifies its adaptability to changing environmental circumstances, including shifts in the political opportunity structure; inclusiveness is the “capability to reflect the broad range of experiences and ideas of the actors who create and employ

[global civil society]” (Warkentin 2001, 20); and, cognizance refers to purposive and self-conscious behavior. Gone are the altruistic assertions of sharing and giving. Instead, what transformationalists retain of their axiological assertions of civility consists solely in “various overlapping norms of non-violent politeness covering matters of indirection, self-restraint and face-saving” (Keane 2003).

By embracing this shift, transformationalists now claim that in coordinating the behavior of its constituent elements, intrinsic values largely determine its instrumental value to the world political system. According to Lipschutz (2007, 304) the correct estimation of instrumental value should therefore “be understood as something of a protective mechanism directed against the depredations of the self-regulating markets of global neo-liberalism as well as the states that organize the political economy in which these markets function”. In short, “they [transformationalists] see it as a way of benefiting the many rather than the few” (Kaldor, et al. 2004, 3). This end is promoted by shaping the preferences, perceptions and values of its constituent elements so that they might more effectively influence the “economic constitutionalism” of capitalist globalization and extend international law (Kaldor, et al. 2004; Lipschutz 2007; Wapner 1996).

Ontologically, the transformationalist thesis has undergone a similar process of revision in recent years. In its initial articulation, transformationalists interpreted the emergence of GCS as a rupturing of the state-centered world political system. At the time it appeared as if the voluntary nature of its associations, in addition to the intrinsic values outlined above, demarcated GCS as a special province of world politics (Keane 2001; Lipschutz 1992; Warkentin 2001). In this telling, the rise of GCS had crowded

out the state, effectively de-centering it as the single dominant authority in the world political system, thereby forcing the state to compete for power on an equal footing with GCS and markets. For if states no longer enjoyed a monopoly over the channels of finance or communication, there is no reason to expect them to retain monopoly control over the institutions of global governance (Keohane 2005; Wapner 1996). GCS had, quite simply, erased the old hierarchy of world politics and ushered in something new:

[A] parallel arrangement of political interaction, one that does not take anarchy and self-help as central organizing principles, but is focused on the self-conscious constructions of networks of knowledge and action, by decentered, local actors, that cross reified boundaries of space as though they were not there (Lipschutz 1992, 238).

Consequently, transformationalists portrayed GCS as an autonomous and self-directed sphere of political authority, whose legitimacy derived from its claims to communal ties.

Recent articulations of the transformationalist ontology, however, take a much more sophisticated view of power dynamics than those illustrated by the zero-sum game approach of earlier iterations. In this effort, Ronnie Lipschutz has led the way by restructuring the transformationalist ontology to align with his observation that the world political system consists of a single social formation, in which GCS “is constitutive of and constituted by states and markets” (Lipschutz 2007, 304). According to Lipschutz, what theorists today label as GCS is little more than the contemporary transnational manifestation of 19th century bourgeois reactionaries. Far from representing the interests of the poor or disenfranchised, what animates GCS is the erosion of property rights and physical protections. In this telling, it is the transformationalist desire to preserve and extend these rights that ultimately distinguishes GCS actors from the exploitative tendencies of market and state forces. When coupled with the emphasis on civility, this

conservative tendency excludes from the list of GCS actors all non-civilian institutions, organizations and entities, including political parties and hybrid NGOs, as well as any non-governmental entities that tend to have violent effects (Keane 2003, 14).

Surprisingly, these axiological and ontological revisions have had little effect on the core political argument of the transformationalist thesis. With respect to the relationships between agents and structures, transformationalists continue to perceive GCS as contentious political agent. According to Keane (2003, 15), its political function is to serve “as a brake or potential check upon various forms of government, and especially absolutist political rule.” But, as Lipschutz (2006b, 110) points out, GCS is the product of global liberal governmentalism and therefore “largely serves to reproduce that form of governance within the structures of power and discourse rather than change it.” GCS is no longer an agent of revolutionary change but rather functions as a fierce defender of the status quo. As a political agent, its transformative effect on the world political system consists, in part, of providing the channels through which individuals and non-state actors can pursue these ends by acquiring influence over political and economic authorities within the world political system (Kaldor 2007).

In addition to these shifting axiological and ontological perspectives, transformationalists also pay particular attention to the strategic deployment of cultural, social and economic devices provided by GCS. In this area of research, Paul Wapner (Wapner 1996, 2002; Wapner and Ruiz 2000) has played a particularly influential role. His expansive definition of politics as “the employment of means to order, direct, and manage human behavior in matters of common concern and involvement” (Wapner 1996, 7) expands the scope of inquiry beyond the more traditional concern for structure-

agent relationships by focusing instead on the ways in which non-state actors shape widespread preferences, perceptions and values. Yet, as Wapner has also come to recognize, for these strategies to work cultures must first be receptive to such manipulation (Wapner 2002). And, as Lipschutz has added, cultures are most susceptible to these influences when the fictionalized public-private divide has been disrupted (Lipschutz 2007, 307). Therefore, in its cultural strategies GCS is more likely to reproduce liberal governmentalism than to transform it.

In sum, the transformationalist thesis portrays GCS as an ontological break in the history of world politics. Its overarching claim is that states and markets must increasingly contend with GCS, and therefore GCS constitutes an increasingly powerful political force in world politics. While GCS may not prove to be the progressive and autonomous political sphere transformationalists previously described, its emergence is nonetheless perceived as a disruption and reconfiguration of the world political system. From this perspective, its emergence marks the introduction of a new and contentious entity on the scene of world political history, a change which has direct implications for the ability of traditionally dominant actors to sculpt the world political system in such a way as to advance their particular preferences, perceptions and values.

The Pragmatic Thesis

Unlike the normative approach of transformationalists, pragmatists focus on the mechanics of GCS. The pragmatist ontology embeds GCS within a set of enabling political institutions, including states and inter-governmental organizations (Keck and Sikkink 1998a; Sikkink 2005). As the nature of these institutions or structures

determines the potential for political action, pragmatists tend to be cautiously optimistic about the contribution of GCS in growing the diversity and complexity of world politics.

Unlike transformationalists, pragmatists express little interest in the axiological characteristics of civil society; rather, their research focuses on “social relationships, the patterns they form, and their implications for choices and behavior” (Anheier and Katz 2005, 207). The intrinsic value of these mechanisms resides in their ability to expand the political resources available to those actors who lack the capacity to govern (D. Della Porta and S. G. Tarrow 2005). Pragmatists view these relationships as political fissures in the edifice of world politics, which opens channels for bringing alternative understandings and information into play. Their intrinsic value, therefore, flows from the opportunities these openings create for the production, exchange and strategic deployment of information (Keck and Sikkink 1998a).

Like transformationalists, pragmatists locate the instrumental value of GCS in its potential to break oppressive cycles of history, to create and proliferate alternative channels of communication, and to empower the voices of the powerless (Hochstetler and Keck 2007; Keck and Sikkink 1998a; Tarrow and McAdam 2005). Pragmatists and transformationalists differ, however, in their ontological assertions. Transformationalists interpret these instrumental functions as signals of an ontological break in the history of world politics; a moment in which GCS emerges as a voluntary and autonomous sphere within the world political system. In contrast, pragmatists interpret the diversity and complexity of modern political history within the context of a state-centric world politics (D. Della Porta and S. Tarrow 2005; Sikkink 2005).

For pragmatists, the rise of GCS marks a break in the political history of the world politics. Thus, from a pragmatic perspective, GCS is successful when it interrupts the abuse or suppression of information, reframes debates by changing their terms, forcing an alteration in the sites of debate, and/or prompts a reconfiguration of the participants. GCS is also successful when it has an influence over the widespread shape of preferences, perceptions, and values (Keck and Sikkink 1998a; Sikkink 2005).

To give this perspective context, pragmatists begin with the ontological assumption that states are the dominant and central actors of the world political system. Pragmatists distinguish GCS from the other prominent features of world politics on the basis of its “voluntary, reciprocal, and horizontal patterns of communication and exchange” (Keck and Sikkink 1998a, 8). At first glance, the particular emphasis on horizontal communication and exchange appears to position GCS in stark contrast between “markets and hierarchies as they have less uncertainty than the former and less complexity than the latter” (Henry, Mohan, and Yanacopulos 2004, 842). This observation has led some scholars to mistakenly narrow the scope of pragmatist inquiry to “the World Social Forum (WSF), as well as a web of regional, national, local, and thematic forums modeled on the WSF’s horizontal, “open space” format” (Reitan 2007, 445), all of which are unified by their contentious orientation to neoliberal globalization.

Underscoring the voluntary, reciprocal, and horizontal characteristic of GCS does not preclude the participation of state and market actors. On the contrary, pragmatists’ lists of GCS actors often feature international intergovernmental organizations, parts of branches of governments, the media, and firms, many of which are fiercely committed to the project of neo-liberal globalization (Keck and Sikkink 1998a, 9). From the pragmatic

perspective, the internal organizational structure and preferences of a particular entity are less important than that entity's willingness to "commit resources to mutually acceptable objectives, sharing risks and long term collaboration" (Henry, et al. 2004, 843) .

Therefore, the pragmatist ontology would have little trouble incorporating political parties and hybrid NGOs into its conception of GCS.

In their political observations, pragmatists perceive GCS as both the product of its environment as well as an agent of environmental change. In the first instance, pragmatists explain the ascendance of GCS as the strategic response to structural opportunities and blockages. For example, Keck and Sikkink (1998a, 12) find that GCS networks are most likely to appear when "the channels between domestic groups and their governments are blocked or hampered." The globalization of civil society is therefore seen as the rational reaction of local and national civil society actors to new and extra-territorial strategic incentives. Pragmatists also hold that globalization can increase the profile and legitimacy of civil society actors, enlarge their prospects for coalition building, and expand the scope of their action repertoire (D. Della Porta and S. Tarrow 2005; Sikkink 2005; Tarrow and McAdam 2005). However, unlike transformationalists, pragmatists do not take this to mean that GCS can supplant or dislodge the state from its role as the single dominant force of the world political system. This conclusion follows from the observation that GCS is contingent upon and conditioned by the legal and physical protections provided by states (Raustiala 1997).

In addition, pragmatists often portray GCS as a contentious political force, positioning it against states and other power brokers in the world political system. However, simply because GCS often engages in contentious behavior, would it then be

correct to assume that its activities are inherently democratic? Della Porta and Diani (2006) say no. Although most manifestations of GCS tend to promote democratic ends, fascist and neo-fascist elements have endeavored to deny democracy altogether. This leads the authors to conclude that GCS is only democratic when it “explicitly demands increased equality and protection for minorities” (246). Yet, even under these heightened conditions, GCS is not immune from the law of unintended consequences. For example, networks promoting democratic reforms on the basis of identity politics can spark the flames of ethnic violence; efforts designed to strengthen democracies can prompt their collapse; and even when successful, the democratic activities of GCS can generate an authoritarian backlash (Della Porta and Diani 2006; Hochstetler 2002).

In sum, the pragmatic perspective perceives GCS as a political break in the history of world politics. This argument breaks from the transformationalist approach in its assumption that GCS remains firmly embedded within the existing state-centered power structure of the world political system. Building on this assumption, pragmatists argue that GCS constitutes an expanding domain of strategic innovation and diffusion within this overarching structure. (Betsill and Corell 2008; Friedman, et al. 2005). The unifying bond within this framework is the emphasis these authors place on the production and strategic use of knowledge. Pragmatists argue that GCS illuminates these dynamics through its collective efforts to expand and diffuse the strategic repertoire.

The Critical Thesis

Finally, critical theorists determine the contribution of GCS to the diversity and complexity of world politics by attempting to locate its relative position within the broader structural configuration of the global political economy (Inayatullah and Blaney

2004; Pasha and Blaney 1998; Stevis 2005). This research agenda springs from their overarching axiological interest in protecting the diversity of values and cultural understandings they see as a necessary condition for creating “a world of the mutual coexistence” and human emancipation (Blaney and Inayatullah 2002, 130). Their concern is that the same processes of economic globalization that underwrite GCS may in fact function through GCS to create a global social hierarchy, which, if true, “risks being self-organized as oligarchy, as effective governance by the few” (Blaney 1995, 58). Hierarchy therefore poses a threat to the critical project of securing human emancipation because hierarchy implies a “centralized construction of norms and far-reaching production of legitimacy, spread out over world space” (Hardt and Negri 2000, 31).

Pragmatists and transformationalists operate under the assumption that political entities possess a consistent set of preferences, perceptions and values and that they then act opportunistically in response to external stimuli. Transformationalists pose the possibility of a cosmopolitan middle class engaged in a continual struggle to preserve and expand its property and rights whereas pragmatists focus on the shifts in political opportunity structures to explain the emergence and calculate the success of actors pursuing local, national and global interests. In contrast, a critical perspective challenges these assumptions by pointing out that rationality is a relative conception insofar as claims of rationality reflect and reproduce an actor’s particular ideological, institutional, or economic position within the international political economy (Foucault 1994b; Stevis 2000). Claims of rationality then are “time and space specific, and the product not of reason, but recurrent practices and instituted belief systems” (Amin and Palan 2001,

564). Thus, GCS cannot contain any universally identifiable intrinsic or instrumental value.

Based on these assumptions, critical theorists contest those theoretical approaches that subsume GCS to an ontology featuring a rationally ordered world political system. Instead, they propose a strategy that is “capable of grasping the orderings of practices that are intersubjective, historicized, socially embedded, and non-cognitive” (Amin and Palan 2001, 560). From this we can infer an ontological perspective that frames the global political order as something that is always in flux and therefore always contingent, with the contingency of political order resting upon the particular structure of class relations at a particular moment in time. This is not to suggest that states no longer matter; on the contrary, critical theorists contend that states are the “institutional condensation of class relations” and therefore remain the dominant and central actors of the world political system (Görg and Hirsch 1998). Thus, GCS “is constituted in relation to and as a check on, rather than a replacement for, the state and the state system” (Pasha and Blaney 1998, 428).

This critical observation of a class-based ontology grows out of its dialectical understanding of reality. That is, critical theorists are primarily concerned with the interplay of historical forces that produce qualitative changes in world politics. This line of inquiry has led to the identification of three key forces that animate the world political system, these are material capabilities, institutions, and ideas/knowledge (Cox 1996). Following Gramsci (1971), critical theorists define the convergence of these forces at any given moment in time as a historic bloc. This term merely designates the site and modality of hegemony within the world political system. Guided by this ontological

method, critics inquire into the origins, nature and historical development of power in world politics.

From a political perspective, critical theorists look beyond the binary modernism of transformationalist and pragmatic theorizing to define as democratic those actors and institutions which seek to incorporate, not assimilate, alternative and marginalized people, issues, and ways of knowing and being in the world (Pasha and Blaney 1998; Stevis 2000). In contrast, transformationalists conceive of difference as a threat to be overcome. They therefore endeavor to naturalize those policies and practices that purport to defend human rights, the articulation and enforcement of international law, the integration of transnational society, and the production of a cosmopolitan identity. Viewed from a critical perspective, pragmatists endeavor to reduce cultural differences to patterned processes and mechanisms, the sum of which functions to deny the value of diverse peoples and cultures. This is perhaps best illustrated by the pragmatist assertion of horizontal and reciprocal relations, which functions to depoliticize the power inequities within GCS.

Transformationalist and pragmatist approaches both reify the dominant hegemony by taking global capitalism and the nation-state system for granted without consideration of the inequalities and alienating relationships they produce. Inequalities are only deemed problematic to the extent that they threaten to undermine the project of liberal modernization. In contrast, critical theorists look to the points of interaction and opposition as opportunities to deepen social policies and democracy, not as threats to manage and challenges to overcome (Blaney and Inayatullah 2002; Pasha and Blaney 1998; Stevis 2002). Democracy, when viewed from this critical perspective, “is not a

type of constitution, nor a form of society but is instead the act of interrupting the social edifice by those who lack the capacity to govern” (Rancière and Corcoran 2006, 47).

In sum, critical theory perceives GCS as an axiological break in the history of world politics. Its observations grow out of the normative claim that the diversity of values and cultural understandings within the world political system is an attribute we should protect and nourish, not a problem to be surmount. Building from this normative position, critical theorists focus specifically on the extent with which GCS can recognize and accommodate cultural diversity (Blaney and Inayatullah 2006; Inayatullah and Blaney 2004). Studies also focus on the hegemonic origins of cultural homogeneity in order to position GCS in relation to these structural features (Stavis 2005).

Consequently, critical theorists are less concerned with variations in the scope and scale of power. Rather, they are more concerned with whether particular configurations of power tend to reinforce the realm of hegemony that is supportive of the *status quo* or the realm of counterhegemony within which emancipatory forces can be constituted (Cox 1999). GCS reinforces the realm of hegemony when its values and practices conform to the established social order rather than working to bring about its transformation into “heterogeneous (global, regional and local) social processes and political arrangements, involving complex ways of demarcating and negotiating, separate, shared, and overlapping authority” (Blaney and Inayatullah 2002, 130).

The Law of Non-Contradiction

This discussion makes clear that further reductions to our theoretical understanding of GCS are both desirable and necessary. As the situation now stands, these theoretical propositions offer contradictory assessments of the role GCS plays in the history of world

politics. For example, GCS cannot simultaneously mark an ontological break *and* a political break in the history of world politics, as the former signifies a reconfiguration of the world political system whereas the latter necessarily rests on the assumption that the traditional configuration of the world political system remains more or less intact. Similarly, the observation of critical theorists that GCS functions as means of projecting the norms and values of a historic bloc is contradictory to transformationalist propositions regarding its role as a force of democratization.

This observation that this situation is unsatisfactory derives from Aristotle's law of non-contradiction, which states "it is impossible for the same thing to belong and not to belong at the same time to the same thing and in the same respect" (Aristotle 1971, IV 3). Aristotle argued that all things possess an essential nature. For example, a human being cannot simultaneously be an aardvark, as these entities have essential and contradictory natures. Aristotle also distinguished between what is essential and what is accidental. For example, it is merely accidental that human beings possess rationality. The observation that many humans possess this capacity is not sufficient to define the entire species, as infants and the insane lack the capacity to reason yet are generally still considered human. A human being only ceases to be a human being when she dies. Thus, Aristotle argued that to signify something is to identify a bearer that has an essential nature (Gottlieb 2007). Aristotle conceded that a single thing may appear differently to different people but went on to argue that these situations are not necessarily irreconcilable. To overcome this predicament, it is necessary to identify the points of contradiction so that we can reveal which of our beliefs are more basic than others. By retaining what is most basic or essential and discarding the rest, we can return

to our normal discourse with improved structure and understanding (Aristotle and Barnes 1994).

Conclusion

How does GCS fit in the history of world politics? Have technology and global capitalism freed civil society from its traditional state moorings, prompting its rapid maturation into an autonomous and inherently democratic political force? Or, have structural adjustments to the world political system merely afforded traditional forms of civil society new opportunities for transnational action? Put differently, does mounting evidence of civil society behaving globally add up to a GCS? Among the diverse theoretical solutions to these questions there is a dividing line between transformationalists who treat GCS as a self-directed and emancipatory political sphere and their skeptics, who frame it, more or less, within the context of traditional state-centric politics. Among the skeptics there is a further division between critical theorists who implicate GCS in the maintenance and expansion of global power asymmetries, and pragmatists who downplay considerations of power in order to highlight the mechanics of transnational non-governmental activity.

By clarifying, evaluating and comparing these diverse theories – transformationalist, pragmatic and critical – this chapter created a foundation on which it will become possible to assess the role of GCS in the domain of global water governance. Because these theories privilege ontological, political or axiological interpretations of the role GCS plays in the history of world politics, they create an opportunity to weigh the congruence of concrete empirical observations with these abstract theoretical propositions. For example, we might ask if claims of democratizing potential are born

out in the observed behavior of key non-governmental organizations. Chapter three builds on these findings by arguing that the global water crisis offers an interesting and salient opportunity to adjudicate these contradictory theoretical frameworks. It also points out that the benefits of this exercise ripple beyond the GCS literature by showing that the role of GCS has largely been overlooked within the literature on global water governance. This point demonstrates the broad value of this research and, more importantly, the salience of GCS to our understanding of world politics.

Chapter Three: The Global Water Crisis

This chapter argues that a consideration of global water resource governance offers an interesting way of evaluating competing theoretical claims about GCS. In doing so, the chapter builds on the argument made in chapter one that GCS plays an integral role in the history of world politics. It demonstrates that GCS has played a prominent role in drawing interest to the problem of water governance, in framing the totality of these problems as a global water crisis, in pushing concern for the global water crisis ever higher up the global agenda, and in taking direct action to address this crisis. This chapter also builds on the observations made in chapter two regarding the variability in theoretical considerations of GCS. It argues that a similar degree of variability exists in the values transnational NGOs inscribe on water. The primary purpose for highlighting this variability is to defend the case study selection. However, a secondary goal is to show that this variability adds depth to my application of the congruence method. Featuring a range of principled positions on the global water crisis makes it possible to assess the congruence of certain theoretical propositions to GCS as a totality, as opposed to observations that base their inferences of GCS on a particular instance or subset of that totality (Keck and Sikkink 1998a; Wapner 1996).

This chapter proceeds in three stages. The first stage briefly sketches the historical development of global water governance. This section demonstrates that GCS plays an increasingly prominent role in the global governance of this critical resource. The second

section draws on recent empirical data to outline the depth and breadth of the crisis in terms of its environmental, humanitarian and economic dimensions. This section goes on to reveal how these problems are manifest in the contradictory values various transnational NGOs inscribe on water. A defense of this categorical framework is then marshaled to support the use of these positions as a basis for the case-study selection. The final section outlines the key functions of GCS within this larger context. Findings point to the role GCS has played in disseminating information, generating greater awareness of interdependence, and integrating this awareness across multiple perceptions of community and authority.

Global Water Governance: Tradition and Transformation

The debate over global water governance is one of the most divisive political issues of our time. All across the world, in every region, every state, every social class, in every industry and every institution, people argue over water. For many, if not most people, water is not a trivial matter. Instead, water is fundamental: people need reliable access to safe water resources in order to obtain an education, to raise a family, to be productive members of society, etc. Put differently, people need water to fulfill basic needs, which results in improved health, action and happiness. In short, each person needs water to live. Water is also fundamental to the production of things that are instrumental to this pursuit. For example, industries require reliable water access to produce the goods that clothe us, educate us, feed us, and keep us healthy. And water is fundamental to the integrity of natural ecosystems, of which humans are but one member of a larger natural community. In sum, global water governance is politically divisive because, regardless of your vantage point, water is a key to determining our prospects for living well.

For much of modern political history the dominant paradigm of global water governance held that states exercise exclusive and sovereign authority over domestic water resources. During the inter-war and post-war periods, this paradigm coincided with the rise of apolitical utilitarianism, scientific management, and engineering as the key ideological and managerial solutions to global resource problems (Irwin 2001). This meant that states relied heavily on supply-side strategies to overcome conditions of water scarcity. In short, states drilled and dammed their way out of water resource problems (Gleick, Wolff, et al. 2002).

Beginning in the 1990s, empirical studies of global water resources unearthed critical flaws in this traditional, centralized, supply-side approach to water governance. In one such study, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP 1998, 41) concluded:

Global freshwater consumption rose six fold between 1900 and 1995 – at more than twice the rate of population growth. About one-third of the world’s population already lives in countries with moderate to high water stress – that is, where water consumption is more than 10 percent of the renewable freshwater supply.

Water stress is made worse by population growth, urbanization, and increasing rates of household and industrial consumption (WHO 2009). While these pressures are evident worldwide, the negative manifestations are most acute in poor countries. In a detailed global analysis of the relationship between water and human health, the World Health Organization (WHO) found that one in three people worldwide lack sufficient water to satisfy their daily needs. The study goes on to identify water scarcity as the primary cause of over 6.3% of annual deaths worldwide, including 1.4 million child deaths from diarrhea. The study concludes that improvements in the governance of drinking water,

sanitation, hygiene and water resources management would relieve 9.1% of the total global burden of disease (Pruss-Ustun, Bos, Gore, and Bartram 2008, 7-12). In sum, these findings indict the traditional model of water governance that privileged a state-centered and supply-side approach to water resource problems. What these findings make clear is that this traditional approach failed to satisfy the most basic levels of reliable access to safe drinking water.

While gripping, the shortcoming of this kind of empirical work is that it often fails to elucidate the points of interdependence that transform popular preferences, perceptions and values related to water governance. When such transformations occur, they move outward from the local to the global, prompting individuals and organizations to re-imagine their understanding of political community.

To make these points of interdependence more explicit, contemporary scholars and practitioners have placed a significant emphasis on the concepts of virtual water and human rights. Virtual water simply describes the amount of water consumed in the production process (Allan 1998). In a detailed study of the concept and its implications, the World Water Council (2004, 14. emphasis added) found that considerations of virtual water cause stakeholders to question their fundamental assumptions about the discrete and local nature of water.

At the global level, virtual water trade has geopolitical implications: it induces dependencies between countries; it is influenced by and has implications on the world food prices as well as on the global trade negotiations and agreements on tariffs and trade. Indeed the issue of virtual water is related to that of globalization, which raises a concern among many politicians and the general public. This can be understood from the fact that *increasing global trade implies increased interdependence of nations*. This can be regarded either as a stimulant to co-operation or as a reason for potential conflict.

Transnational NGOs like the Stockholm International Water Institute and the World Water Council (WWC) played a leading role in identifying these points of interdependence, in framing these issues in the context of a global water crisis, and in pushing this global water crisis ever higher up the global agenda. For example, the WWC performed these functions by producing information on the global water crisis and disseminating this information through its triennial World Water Forum.

Transnational NGOs have also interrupted traditional perceptions of water governance by highlighting the humanitarian dimension of interdependence associated with these water resource problems. Indeed, transnational NGOs like Red Vida, Food and Water Watch, the Sierra Club, and the Council of Canadians played a key role in framing these humanitarian points of interdependence in a human rights context. These actors defended this claim by arguing that some minimal level of reliable access to safe drinking water is necessary for the satisfaction of other internationally recognized human rights, not the least of which is the right to life. This argument has attracted wide support, providing these transnational NGOs a strategic opportunity to press for a new and more just paradigm of global water governance – one that rests “on the principle of equality and capability to do and to be” (Mehta 2003, 567). Richard Jolly (as quoted in Gleick 2007, 3), a former special advisor to the Administrator of the United Nations Developmental Programme (UNDP), summarized the human rights position by pointing out its potential implications, not just for domestic policies but also for the common but differentiated responsibilities states share as members of the world political system.

To emphasize the human right of access to drinking water does more than emphasize its importance. It grounds the priority on the bedrock of social and economic rights, it emphasizes the obligations of states parties to ensure

access, and it identifies the obligations of states parties to provide support internationally as well as nationally.

Those who propose such a radical reconfiguration of global water governance ultimately ground their arguments on the assumption that recent evidence of a deepening global water crisis reveals a set of critical and irreparable flaws within the traditional paradigm. But as Sandra Postel (2007, 52) argues, to adopt this assumption is to risk throwing out the baby with the bathwater. She says,

The water strategies of the twentieth century helped provide much of the human population with drinking water, food, electricity, and flood control. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine today's world of 6.5 billion people and \$55 trillion in economic output without the vast network of water infrastructure now in place—from dams and reservoirs to wells, pumps, and canals. This infrastructure, however, has disrupted the functioning of aquatic ecosystems on a large scale. If future human needs are to be met without costly and irreparable harm to ecological health, new strategies will be needed that incorporate a broader set of ecological goals into water planning and management.

Recent empirical findings produced by transnational NGOs tend to support this conclusion. In a 2006 study of the health of the world's freshwater ecosystems, the WWF found that freshwater species declined by 30% between 1970 and 2003. The study goes on to attribute this decline to the systematic damming and alteration of river systems. To support this assertion the WWF cites a detailed study of dam-based impacts on large ecosystems (Nilsson, Reidy, Dynesius, and Revenga 2005, 405). This study found that of the 292 largest rivers in the world over one half (172) are negatively affected by dams. The study concluded that dammed and reregulated rivers strongly limit organism dispersals, which means that biodiversity is less likely to persist and organisms within the affected area are less able to adapt to new environmental conditions (Nilsson, et al. 2005, 407).

In economic, social and political terms, another transnational NGO, The Nature Conservancy, has played a leading role in framing this evidence of environmental degradation in the context of environmental services. In their analysis of freshwater biodiversity conservation, Karen Silk et al. (2005, 5-6) link the global declines in freshwater ecosystems to declines in human health and well-being. They write,

Many rivers can no longer provide flood control for downstream communities, since they have been channelized or engineered to stay within their banks and their watersheds have been altered through land clearing, the draining of wetlands, and the expansion of impervious surfaces (e.g., through paving). When the flood comes, it is often larger and more destructive than would have occurred naturally as it moves into the river more quickly, has no place to meander or spread, and moves faster to downstream locations. In many areas of the world, water extracted from rivers, lakes and groundwater is no longer safe for drinking without additional and often costly treatment. Rates of infectious disease carried by water are on the rise. Many commercial as well as recreational fishing catches in freshwater and marine declined or have been eliminated.

Thus, the failure to incorporate ecological concerns into water governance decisions costs money and it costs lives. Moreover, these costs ripple throughout the world political system in ways that are difficult to quantify. Still, we can say with a high degree of certainty that the consequences include lower levels of productivity, higher levels of political and social instability, and a more widespread awareness of regional and global interdependence.

However, this growing sense of interdependence has not yet generated the political will required to solve these critical water resource problems. There are many reasons for the continued absence of political leadership and government commitment to water resource issues. According to Easter and Hearne (1993, 2), the problem originates in the conflation of rule-making and service delivery functions. Thus, “without some assurance that water resources agencies will provide the desired levels of services, users

are not willing to share in the investment, operations, and maintenance costs.” Claudia Pahl-Wostl, et al. (2007, 13) contribute to this observation by pointing out the complexities of learning a new, more complex and diverse governance system – a learning process that is more art than science. They claim,

the development of . . . adaptive institutional settings involves continued processes of social learning in which stakeholders at different scales are connected in flexible networks and sufficient social capital and trust is developed to collaborate in a wide range of formal and informal relationships ranging from formal legal structures and contract to informal voluntary agreements.

Variables that slow this learning process include the lack of institutional capacity, institutionalized gender discrimination, and financial constraints (Lenton, Wright, and Lewis 2005, 26-27).

These are precisely the kinds of problems that GCS is well suited to address. Theoretical considerations of GCS often count its high degree of specialization, mobility, and strategic repertoire among its greatest strengths. Yet, while GCS has proved to be an effective advocate for making improvements in global water governance, as “technical specialists, civil society actors, and others [have failed] to make a compelling case to decisionmakers concerning the social and economic benefits of access to water supply and sanitation services” (Lenton, et al. 2005, 26). In its most recent analysis of the state of the world’s water resources, the *United Nations World Water Development Report* (2009, xix) attributes this shortcoming to the failure of many actors within GCS to recognize the role water plays in achieving their objectives. The study goes on to stress the importance of inclusive decisionmaking processes and implementation efforts to achieving the goals of long-term sustainability and expanded service coverage. The

Report concludes that the problem has not so much to do with the quality of GCS engagement on water resource issues but is instead a function of its quantity: “With the large numbers of water management stakeholders, governments are increasingly constrained in what they can achieve alone. They will need to rely more on an informed and capable civil society whose role in water management complements the work of government agencies” (UN 2009, 256). However, at the present time there are simply not enough actors within GCS who address water resource problems to adequately meet these needs.

Thus, the history of global water governance has grown more complex and diverse over time. GCS has played an integral role in this historic process, a role that will likely grow well into the foreseeable future. For example, there is greater need for direct engagement by GCS in the management of water resources; precisely the kind of role already performed by organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, the WWF, and Friends of the Earth. These NGOs function as the resource hub of transnational networks, tying local and national non-governmental water organizations to key decision-makers at the global or regional scales. Furthermore, there is also a need for advocacy groups, like the Council of Canadians, International Rivers, and Green Cross International, that perform a critical role in elevating the status of water resource problems up the national, regional, and global agenda (WWAP 2009). According to Steven Loranger (2010), water resource problems fall into that category of issues that people tend to ignore until it’s too late (Loranger 2010). Therefore, there is a pressing need to raise the profile of this issue, and this is a function at which GCS tends to excel.

Struggle and disagreement are integral to this learning process. Although the scalar transition to a global perception of water resource problems and solutions is now widespread, political entities continue to perceive water issues differently. Thus, the landscape of global water governance has emerged as a site of intense political struggle and contradiction. These disagreements are not, however, a sign of weakness but should instead be perceived as a sign of strength, both because they contain the promise of producing solutions that work for improving human well-being and environmental sustainability and also because they make it possible to expose proposals that do not work. The following section outlines the diverse and complex range of positions on global water governance by highlighting the key points of disagreement within this unfolding global debate.

Global Water Governance: Diversity and Complexity

Throughout much of human history, the political divisions over water resources were largely confined to their specific local or national context. Were it not for the most recent wave of economic globalization, it would likely have remained that way. Today, however, powerful states, international institutions, and corporations have come to perceive water resource problems as a threat to their neo-liberal project of global capital accumulation. Even when local or national governments retain authority over water resource decision-making, these governments often come under pressure to allocate water in whatever way promises the greatest economic return. At least with respect to economic considerations, this means that more and more people are finding it difficult to draw “a clear distinction between international and domestic, external and internal affairs” (Held 1999, 7). This also means that water and its governance are in the process

of a scalar transition, meaning the point at which widespread perceptions of interdependence shift upward from the local to the national and finally to the global, while conceptions of authority move outward from centralized and participatory forms to decentralized and exclusive forms of governance.

Evidence of this scalar transition first appeared in the early 1990s (Gleick 1999, 1526). Previous articulations of water use objectives had underscored concerns for localized and discrete issues of power, economic status, recreation and spiritual renewal, and human survival (R. Barlow 1956; Muir 1918). To some, however, it seemed that many of these objectives were out of sync with the mounting evidence of a deepening global water crisis. These considerations of appropriate scale culminated in the 1992 Rio Declaration, which identified the overarching objective of global water resource use as the maintenance of social well-being (UN 1992a). In making this claim, the Rio Declaration intended to prioritize the satisfaction of basic needs and ecosystem integrity in matters of global water governance over other less-essential, utilitarian claims to water. Simply put, the Declaration's aim was "to ensure that water policy and its implementation are a catalyst for sustainable social progress and economic growth" across the world (UN 1992a).

Because of attention garnered by this scalar shift, the Declaration prompted an intense and enduring philosophical debate. In the course of outlining a global strategy for solving water resource problems, the Rio Declaration overreached by reducing the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of water problems to a single integrated approach. The Declaration variously defined water as a social good, a basic need and an economic good, and found it to be vital to the integrity of aquatic ecosystems (UN

1992a). Practitioners, scholars, and others have since struggled to reconcile these different dimensions of water governance. For example, a social goods argument tends toward a utilitarian conception of water governance that establishes the criterion for water decision-making as the greatest good for the greatest number. In contrast, a basic needs approach tends to align more closely with an individualist human rights argument, which places an emphasis on equal access and just distribution. These debates over the most appropriate principle or value for adjudicating competing water resource claims have developed over time into three dominant perspectives: water as an economic good, a public good and as a basic need.

Water As An Economic Good

For some, water is first and foremost an economic good. Typically this means that water possesses economic value in all its competing uses, with the economic value holding precedence over any other value type. The standard argument is that full-cost pricing can help to maintain the sustainability of water resources by correctly structuring economic incentives in such a way that “the resource will be put to its most valuable uses” (Naiman, et al. 2002, 2). Thus, as the price of water increases, we are told to expect corresponding reductions in demand, more efficient allocation, and, consequently, an overall increase in water supplies (Saleth and Dinar 2004). The economic position also claims that the benefits of full-cost pricing may lead to greater equity, as “higher rates allow utilities to extend services to those currently not served and those currently forced to purchase water from vendors at very high prices” (Naiman, et al. 2002, 2). To support these assertions, advocates point to high black-market prices for water as evidence of the willingness to pay; and, since official pricing estimates often come in well below the

prices charged by black market retailers (Cho, Easter, McCann, and Homans 2005; Serageldin 1994), the implication is that full-cost pricing is not just a viable approach but is also one that could generate substantive improvements in quality and access. It is the “failure to place a price on water that reflects its economic value in its various alternative uses,” some argue, that produces “wasteful and environmentally damaging use and results in its misallocation” (Winpenny 2003, 1).

Among those who advocate an economic approach, the preferred political strategy is therefore to promote monetization and privatization. To do so, economic advocates employ three broad argumentative strategies. First, they assert that the pressure to marketize grows in proportion to the intensification of physical water scarcity. They see scarcity as the consequence of perverse incentive structures that mask the true value of water in all its competing uses. Assigning water an accurate economic value therefore promises to convey a more precise signal of resource conditions to consumers, thus discouraging low-value uses and allocation inefficiencies (KPMG 2008). Second, advocates contend that the centralized public management model should be replaced with a decentralized system. In this context, decentralization refers to the separation of management and regulatory functions. Decentralization is thought to enhance accountability by reducing political interference in management decisions and increase efficiency by introducing competition and market discipline in water management decision-making (Bank 2002). Finally, advocates argue that “legal changes are needed to facilitate a private and transferable water rights system that ensures full legal, physical, and tenure certainty of water rights” (Saleth and Dinar 2004, 11), as property rights create a favorable climate for private investment, increase individual

initiative and choice in resource use, encourage allocation to high-value uses, and promote politically neutral decision making.

To advance this economic agenda, advocates tend to rely on top-down approaches that use the comparative advantages of formal international institutions like the World Bank and IMF. These institutions provide technical assistance and financial support for the construction and maintenance of large infrastructure projects, but often do so with strings attached. This was the case in Tanzania, where government officials succumbed to pressure from the World Bank and the IMF to transition management authority over the water utility in Dar es Salaam to private hands (Greenhill and Wekiya 2004, 2). In some cases, these international institutions actively promote private sector investments by insuring investors against a variety of risks, including local resistance (M. Barlow 2008a, 40). Advocates also create networks comprised of powerful states, NGOs, International Institutions, Corporations, and individuals who shared a common agenda. According to one researcher, these networks employ a complex strategy of information production and social learning through the use of transnational water conferences, training seminars, and policy papers, the sum of which “effectively filled the spaces and saturated the marketplace of ideas on water policy in global civil society” (Goldman 2007, 793).

Water As A Public Good

A second position claims water as a public good, approaching the problem of water resources governance through the lens of local communities. Advocates argue that water resource problems are the consequence of undemocratic decision-making systems in the pursuit of short-term interests. Their solution is to argue for a re-focusing of water

governance on the interests of people and nature, not profits (Gleick, Wolff, et al. 2002). To advance this agenda, advocates argue that water possesses particular physical characteristics, which make it more of a collective or common pool resource than a purely private good. Whereas private goods are generally understood to be rival and excludable in consumption, several scholars have pointed out the nonexcludable nature of water. This characteristic is evident in collective efforts to use and manage water resources for agricultural systems (Ostrom 1990) and in examples of cooperation in conditions of scarcity (Trawick 2003). The most noteworthy claim is that water is not only vital to human and ecosystem survival, but that it is also non-substitutable (Gleick and Palaniappan 2009). Additionally, water resources are frequently inscribed with cultural and spiritual values, values which are impossible to accurately assess through a pricing regime (Shiva 2002). This finding is significant because it deflates the claim that pricing strategies can effectively convey the value of water in all its competing uses. Therefore, the answer to water resource problems is that we need to construct a regulatory framework that guarantees a just distribution, rather than rely on an economic model that advances profits over all other considerations (Bakker 2007; Quesne, Pegram, and Heyden 2007).

The shortcoming of this position is that it tends to operate on an abstract and theoretical plane, detached from the power struggles and knowledge asymmetries that animate real-life ambiguities of water resource governance. In her analysis of public goods claims to water, Lyla Mehta (2003, 559) points out that claims of cooperative management often miss the mark, that instead most “people see water as an issue over which they compete and are divided. Thus there is an urgent need to broaden the notion

of water users. In most cases users are disparate groups with diverse institutional and social positions.”

In practice, public goods advocates use a variety of political strategies. Most notably, they lobby for the protection of a social and public right to water in legal and constitutional arrangements. Typically the pressure to incorporate this right also includes protection for environmental needs, an effort which, more recently, has centered on the concept of environmental flows (Hirji and Davis 2009) and environmental services (Silk and Ciruna 2005). To generate this pressure, public rights advocates educate, mobilize, and direct grass-roots campaigns. They also reach out to transnational organizations and powerful states in order to bring pressure to bear from the top-down (Hochstetler 2002). Some rely on specialized knowledge to make their case to protect vital resources (Haas 1992) and others resort to violent protest (FOEI 2003; Hall and Lobina 2006).

Water As A Basic Need

A final position defines water as a basic need. This concept draws attention to the minimum amount of water that is essential to several aspects of human life, ranging from safe drinking water to bathing (Ryan 2001, 11). For the basic needs position, the question is not whether individuals can survive without these things, but rather about what quantity of water is required in order to live well. Clearly individuals can survive without water for bathing, without reliable access to safe water for cooking, etc.; however, those who live in such conditions are more susceptible to disease and premature death. In one study, Peter Gleick (1996) measured basic water needs by calculating the minimum daily needs for drinking water, hygiene, sanitation services, and food preparation to arrive at a general figure of 50 liters per person per day. What

these types of studies assume is that the satisfaction of a basic need for water is necessary and prior to the satisfaction of other needs. Much of this assumption relies upon the theory that starving people, sick people, and impoverished people are denied their agency, their dignity, and their equality (Nussbaum 2006; Sen 1999). Thus, a basic need is different from a public good in that it points to the needs of individuals, not simply the needs of collectives, making water resource issues simultaneously individualistic and universal, insofar as the issue of water allocation references a minimum quantity and quality that cannot be denied to any person, at any time, or in any place.

Whereas a public goods approach tends to promote a top-down regulatory solution, the basic needs approach calls for bottom-up efforts that empower marginalized people to demand their fair share of water resources. Because the satisfaction of a basic need to water is essential to the satisfaction of other basic needs, advocates of this position argue that water resource concerns rise above economic and utilitarian logics that ignore considerations of equality and justice (Calaguas 1999). Thus, the rhetorical strategies used by basic needs advocates prioritize the particular needs of the powerless. Viewed from this perspective, the need for water is something one has simply by virtue of being human. Water is an entitlement possessed by all people everywhere. This implies that basic needs are equal, meaning that everyone has the same legitimate claim to a minimal amount of water as everyone else (M. Barlow and Clarke 2002). Therefore, needs translate into rights and the right to water is inalienable: it cannot be denied to anyone, by anyone, for any reason. At the rhetorical level, the attempt to reframe needs as rights constitutes an effort to depoliticize the issue of water, since to agree with the

claim “water is a right” is to agree that no one can be denied water. While people may argue about what quality and quantity is reasonable for living a life of dignity, defining water as a right forecloses any debate that such a minimum exists. Furthermore, by acknowledging such a right, the grantor of the right bears a duty or responsibility to secure the right for the grantee; no analogous prescriptive burden exists under an economic or public-goods approach (Gutmann 2001; Waldron 2000, 121).

In order to secure one’s basic need for water, advocates pressure for guarantees to the human right to water in state and international law. These guarantees have already been enshrined in more than 30 countries, the most notable of which are Britain, Uruguay, and South Africa (Salman and McInerney-Lankford 2004, 70). In addition, human rights advocates also promote the reframing of water as a public trust, which they view as necessary to reinforce the authority of states against the threats posed by privatization (M. Barlow 2008a). By modifying the norms of international society, states could be more easily subject to shaming strategies of NGOs and others. Of course, grounding international norms of water governance in a human rights context also works to ensure that water governance decisions are subject to political will, as opposed to short-term economic interests. In addition, the implementation of human rights protections at the national level elevates the role of the judicial system over that of the executive and legislative. Because human rights advocates tend to frame water as a public trust, the multiplication of legitimate users generated through the adoption of a human rights regime inevitably leads to conflicts over the appropriation of finite water resources (Getzler 2004). As such conflicts tend to erupt over competing legal interpretations and variability in the application of legislative statutes, these conflicts

tend to fall under the purview of the courts, which raise concerns about participation and legitimacy as the judicial branch is the weakest and least democratic branch of government.

Global Civil Society: Agreement and Discord

Because reliable water access is essential to the integrity of economic, social, environmental, and political systems, everyone has a stake in the outcome of water resource decision-making. Yet many states have thus far failed to resolve this fundamental problem. In recent years, this vacuum allowed GCS to play an increasingly prominent role in the global debate over water resource management. In one respect, GCS has been united in its insistence both that the contemporary paradigm of water governance is unsustainable and that the depth of water resource problems constitutes a crisis of global proportions. On these points, GCS has played a key role in the global discussion on water resources management by generating and disseminating information about the depth and breadth of the global water resource crisis; by raising public awareness about the interdependence between the economic, social and political dimensions of water resource problems; and by integrating this sense of interdependence across local, national and global perceptions of community. Yet beyond these fundamental points of agreement, the unity of purpose that motivates GCS falls prey to a deep and persistent discord over the most effective solution to these global water resource problems. What animates this discussion is a disagreement over the fundamental values outlined above.

Surprisingly, this is a conversation that has been largely ignored by global water resource scholars. To a large extent, the academic literature on global water politics

remains transfixed on the transboundary dimension of water resource problems. Inexplicably, this research has been spellbound by the question of how states resolve the disagreements that erupt over shared water resources (Eckert, Smith, and Egteren 2008; Norman and Bakker 2009; Severskiy 2004; South, et al. 2004; Uitto and Duda 2002), granting little to no consideration of the role that GCS plays in the history of global water resource governance. Indeed, *The United Nations World Water Development Report 3: Water in a Changing World* (WWAP 2009) cites the need for additional research into the role GCS plays in this unfolding story. Specifically, the Report finds the need for “a thorough analysis of the contributions of the NGO sector . . . showing the unique characteristics of different kinds of NGOs, their contributions, their limitations and a perspective on their future role” (WWAP 2009, 54). Thus, while the principal aim of this dissertation is to explore the way in which GCS fits in the history of world politics, a topic that will appeal most to the community of GCS theorists, a secondary but equally important task is to jolt the substantially larger community of global water resource scholars out of their fixation on the state.

The most prominent exception to this state-centric view of the global water crisis is Ken Conca’s (2006), *Governing Water: Contentious Transnational Politics and Global Institution Building*. In this work, Conca addresses two central questions: (1) how have the institutions of global water governance changed over time and (2) what role have non-state actors played in initiating and shaping these changes. Institutions are important, he argues, because they make up the “embedded, enduring sets of roles and rules that give shape and form to a whole array of struggles over time” (Conca 2006, 24). However, institutions are not isolated from societal pressures but are instead

somewhat vulnerable to shifts in social values. What makes the institutional development of global water governance so interesting, Conca argues, is the presence of several parallel and distinct trajectories of normative development. Evidence of these normative trajectories emerge within case study chapters that explore the various ways in which epistemic communities, social and environmental activists, international organizations, and states create and recreate the institutional dimension of global water governance. This finding prompts Conca to conclude (1) that the depth and breadth of the global water crisis exposes the urgent need for a more coherent institutional framework of global water governance, and (2) that the normative conflicts that animate contemporary debates over water constitute the foremost obstacle to the realization of this goal. Conca's preference is to overcome this problem by creating more robust forms of deliberative democracy. This means more effective and inclusive stakeholder dialogue and more hybridized authority in institutional arrangements.

So far, however, few scholars have taken up the challenge of polishing and extending Conca's analysis. Instead, contemporary scholars appear content to work within the comfortable constraints of their state-centric traditions. One aim of this dissertation is to persuade these scholars to take GCS seriously. To this end, I extend Conca's analysis beyond the institutional sphere by examining the role the GCS plays in two additional areas: the direct governance of water resources and the formation of preferences, perceptions and values about water. Institutional arrangements are most effective when they are consistent with the values of the people they seek to govern. Therefore, it is logical to assume that civil society actors might endeavor to reconfigure popular values as a means of altering institutional arrangements. Furthermore, civil

society actors frequently pursue objectives that have little or no connection with the functions or goals of governing institutions. For example, groups like TNC and WWF frequently undertake ecological work that is unrelated to any immediate institutional aim. Nevertheless, such actions are political insofar as they generate questions about accountability, legitimacy, and the origins of political authority. By drawing attention to these issues, this dissertation promises to provide a more coherent and nuanced understanding of way in which GCS fits in the history of global water governance.

The remainder of this dissertation will show the contributions of GCS to be as diverse as it is substantial. Its diversity is manifest in the preferences, perceptions and values of its competing factions. As the competition among these factions intensify, these arguments serve to attract greater attention to this important issue and they function to define the possible constellation of legitimate solutions to this seemingly intractable problem. Consequently, these conversations shape the way decisionmakers and the general public think about water resource problems. But the significance of GCS also extends beyond the theoretical and rhetorical. GCS is also increasingly involved in direct ecological work, including everything from ecosystem assessments to environmental education to water resources management.

To illuminate this diversity, the case studies that follow feature organizations that are prominent players within their particular ideological cohort. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) ranks foremost among those organizations that value water as a public good. Specifically, TNC perceives water as an environmental good, a view that is consistent with its overarching mission to preserve ecosystem integrity and prevent the loss of biodiversity. The Council of Canadians (COC) ranks foremost among those

organizations that privilege the value of water as a basic need. The COC champions the view that water is first and foremost a human right, a value it endeavors to enshrine by incorporating this right into national and international law. Green Cross International (GCI) holds the view that water is an economic good. This view is consistent with GCI's desire to interrupt and reconfigure widespread preferences, perceptions and values of water and nature. In other words, its economic conception of water serves an instrumental function, which is to effectively realign widespread behavior so as to secure a more sustainable level of resource use.

In addition to illuminating the diversity of GCS, my strategic goal is to determine the extent with which competing theoretical perspectives on GCS can effectively explain the variability that exists within GCS. To advance this objective, each case study chapter weighs the strengths and weaknesses of each theoretical approach by determining their ability to accurately explain the behavior of each NGO in the realm of global water governance.

Conclusion

The transition from a local to a national and finally to a global conception of water resource governance, although still contested, requires an even more fundamental shift in the way people value water and the way they perceive their place within the world political system. This transition is achieved by identifying points of interdependence, with this sense of interdependence integrated into local, national and global conceptions of community. It is achieved as well by integrating those ecological conceptions of community that govern the human-nature relationship. It is a transition that preserves

distinct and localized conceptions of community/resource problems even as it cements more abstract notions of globally shared interests, rights and obligations.

The question of GCS much discussed in the social sciences, is, politically speaking, a question of interdependence, which is also a question of integration. In short, it is a question of “fit”: what is the role and place of GCS in the history of world politics? Considerations of water governance, the focus of this chapter, bring this question to the fore. Reliable access to safe water resources is essential for the preservation and flourishing of all environmental and social systems, thus the stakes of governing water are high. Nonetheless, a growing body of empirical data shows that traditional strategies of water governance led to the emergence of a widespread and worsening water crisis. As conditions deteriorate worldwide, traditional conceptions of water as a discrete and local resource are giving way to the conception of water as a shared and global problem. This growing awareness of interdependence has been manifest in a display of diverse and complex forms of water resources governance. However, with at least one notable exception, this development has been largely overlooked within the literature. Thus, given the high stakes of water resource governance as well as the recent and ongoing transition in popular perceptions water resource problems, the issue of water governance provides an interesting and largely unexplored lens for exploring the question of GCS and its fit within the world political system.

Chapter Four: The Nature Conservancy

Chapter Three argued that scholars once thought of global water governance as the exclusive domain of states; but that was yesterday. Today, the picture is far more complex. States now share the stage with a wide assortment of actors, each of which has a unique part to play. Chapter three also demonstrated that global civil society is a key to understanding this complex arrangement. Few actors have been as vital to this historic process as The Nature Conservancy (TNC). Fifteen years ago, TNC burst onto the scene of global water governance and has played a leading role ever since. Few other transnational non-state actors have had as broad and deep an effect on the history of global water governance in as short a time. But what makes TNC interesting has as much to do with the way TNC has been transformed by these efforts as it does with its efforts to transform the domain of global water politics. Investigating both aspects makes it possible to adjudicate competing theoretical claims about the way GCS fits into the history of global water governance specifically and the history of world politics more generally.

In short, this chapter uses TNC and its Freshwater Conservation Initiative as a means of adjudicating the dominant theoretical claims about GCS introduced in Chapter Two. This use of environmental NGOs as a vanguard for GCS is common within the literature on GCS (Hochstetler 2002; Keck and Sikkink 1998a; Wapner 2002) and global water governance more specifically (Conca 2006; Finger and Allouche 2002a). As

Chapter Three demonstrated, TNC is relevant to this endeavor because it focuses on solving the environmental dimensions of water resource problems, and as such it tends to behave differently from more mainstream approaches that stress the public good or economic dimensions of these problems.

This chapter unfolds in several stages. It begins with a discussion of TNC's origins and organizational structure. This background sets the stage for a detailed analysis of TNC's political ontology, values, and strategies. This investigation reveals an organization that is as transformed as it is transformative. The final section weighs these findings against the expectations of competing theoretical perspectives on GCS, concluding that a pragmatic perspective offers the most satisfactory understanding of TNC and its role in global water governance. Nevertheless, the ultimate conclusion is that further theoretical reduction is needed before we can determine what is essential and what is ancillary to our understanding of GCS and the role it plays in world political history. This reduction, if done correctly, holds the promise of allowing us to return to our normal discourse about GCS with improved structure and understanding.

Introduction to TNC

Origins

Just forty miles from Manhattan, the Mianus River cuts through a steep sylvan gorge of gneiss and schist¹ as it winds its way to the murky water of Long Island Sound; the clear and sometimes rushing river flows around moss-covered boulders under a dense canopy of old-growth hemlock and beech. Hidden above, among the boulder-choked and vertical

¹ Gneiss and schist are types of metamorphic rock.

walls, is a patchwork of wetlands and free-flowing tributaries, which both cleanse and nourish the river on its short but swift journey.

For centuries, developers probed the edges of this rugged Gorge, clearing the surrounding land to make way for pastures and farms, but the steep valley walls made the Gorge unsuitable for grazing or timber cutting. After the Civil War, farmers abandoned the area to seek out new opportunities further west. Trees and weeds reclaimed the pastures; and although the previous degree of biological diversity did not return, the abandoned farms nonetheless acted as a buffer zone by protecting the unscathed ecosystem within the Gorge from the modern pressures of suburban sprawl.

This was the situation when, in the fall of 1953, a small group of local conservationists and neighbors rediscovered the Mianus River Gorge. What they found was a thriving and diverse ecosystem containing 150 species of birds, over 100 species of trees, shrubs and vines, and 250 species of wildflowers (USGS 2003). It was, in the words of one observer, nothing less than “an outdoor schoolroom, a sanctuary, a museum and a place of abiding beauty” (MRGP 2009a).

Unfortunately, the thrill of this discovery was short lived. In the winter of 1953, the Greenwich Water Company announced its plan to dam the Mianus River and drown the Gorge. In response, these local conservationists and neighbors joined forces to form the Mianus Gorge Conservation Group, the purpose of which was “to preserve, protect, and promote appreciation of the natural heritage of the Mianus River Gorge and the quality of its watershed” (MRGP 2009a). In its first official act, the Conservation Group forged a coalition of local garden clubs and concerned neighbors to successfully negotiate with the water utility for a smaller and less threatening dam. However, within months of

concluding its agreement with the Water Company, the Group learned of another threat looming on the horizon. On Christmas Eve, 1953, word reached group organizers that a local developer had planned to buy up sixty acres of old-growth forest in the heart of the Mianus River Gorge. To meet this new threat, the Group scrambled to raise enough money to match the developer's down payment by the New Year. Although successful, the Group had just six months to raise the remaining balance and close the deal.

To raise this money, the Conservation Group turned to TNC for help.

Incorporated in 1951, TNC splintered from the Ecological Society of America, a professional organization of ecologists that promotes ecological science. What made TNC unique was its resolve to take direct action to protect critical natural areas and the biodiversity they contain. An early mission statement outlines the type of actions TNC had in mind:

The Nature Conservancy is a body dedicated to the preservation of natural areas for scientific, educational and aesthetic ends. It is an action organization which through private voluntary efforts acquires a bit of wilderness, an unspoiled natural spot, a treasure of God's handywork to study, to exult over, to draw strength from (Pough 1954, 3).

Between 1951 and 1953, TNC built up its organizational capacity: it held regular meetings, published several newsletters, increased its membership base, and attracted donations (Pough 1955). Thus, when the Mianus Gorge Conservation Group approached TNC President Richard Pough in December 1953, it was in a prime position to help.

After visiting the site, Pough and future TNC President Richard Goodwin agreed that the Gorge was worth saving. In 1954, TNC pledged \$7,500 to help purchase the sixty-acre tract on the condition that the money be repaid for use in other conservation projects (TNC 2009o). This deal spawned a new land trust, the Mianus River Gorge

Preserve, Inc., which was charged with managing the site. Since its inception, the Preserve has grown in size to 738 acres, of which TNC owns 555 acres (TNC 2009o). In 1964, the Mianus River Gorge became the first National Natural Landmark in the United States, thus validating the time and energy spent protecting this unique example of biodiversity and old-growth forest (MRGP 2009b).

In many respects, TNC's involvement in the Mianus River Gorge established a pattern for many of the projects that followed. From the outset, TNC envisioned itself as a leading national environmental organization, whose objective was "to weld the energies represented in sporadic local efforts into a continuing united campaign that would have the size and strength to take its rightful place in a country that does things on a gigantic scale" (Pough 1954, 1). In the Mianus River Gorge, TNC established its role as a technical and financial resource for local conservation groups. In this capacity, TNC has amplified the effects of local conservation efforts providing the knowledge and resources needed to achieve conservation goals. In this case, TNC loaned money to the local organization, bought land on the group's behalf, and paid for environmental studies of the Gorge including ongoing inventories of its plants and animals. TNC has helped the local group leverage these capabilities to attract national attention by seeking and acquiring the National Natural Landmark designation. In sum, TNC's involvement in the Mianus River Gorge project established a scientific, collaborative and solution-based philosophy to its ecological work, the goal of which is to produce tangible and lasting results.

Over time, TNC has forged this philosophy into one of the largest and most successful conservation organizations in the world. Today TNC works in over 600 sites scattered across 30 countries and 5 continents. The organization has over 3200

employees, an operating budget of nearly \$450 million, and over \$4.6 billion in assets. It ranks as one of the top 20 charities in the United States in terms of private funds raised. According to its 2009 annual report, foundations constitute the largest source of dues and contributions at 43%, followed by individuals at 25%, and bequests at 24%. TNC also won \$125 million in government grants (TNC 2009t). TNC claims to have more than one million members, each of whom receives a quarterly magazine. TNC also works with a diverse range of partners, including indigenous groups, non-governmental organizations, corporations and governments. According to its website, TNC has leveraged these resources over time to protect nearly 120 million acres of land and 5,000 miles of rivers worldwide (TNC 2009a).

Organizational Structure

TNC focuses its efforts on seven environmental issues, each of which it classifies under the heading of “Conservation Initiatives:” 1) Protected Areas, 2) Marine Conservation, 3) Freshwater Conservation, 4) Climate Change, 5) Fire, 6) Invasive Species, and 7) Forest Conservation. Some of these initiatives are more fundamental than others. For example, the Protected Areas, Forest Conservation and Invasive Species initiatives are the primary focus of TNC’s work, and, as such, are the general concern of all TNC staff and volunteers. In contrast, Freshwater Conservation, Climate Change, Fire, and Marine Conservation initiatives each warrant specialized attention by a dedicated staff of scientists, lawyers and administrative personnel.

What these initiatives share in common is the structural capacity to fuse the local and global dimensions of each issue area into a reflexive and coherent strategic effort. TNC structures each Initiative from the ground up (see Figure 2 below). The strategic

process begins by undertaking ecological work on the ground. This experience provides the skill and knowledge needed to identify the sources of ecological stress. Next, TNC traces these stresses to their socioeconomic source, which, for each initiative, entails at least some aspect of global economic, social or political processes. For TNC, this stage of the process is essential to developing strategic efforts at a sufficient size and scale to actually solve the problem. Finally, TNC sets out its definition of success at both the local and global scales of analysis so that it can evaluate the efficacy of its strategic efforts over space and time (Weeks 1997, 15).

Figure 1: Map of TNC Field Offices

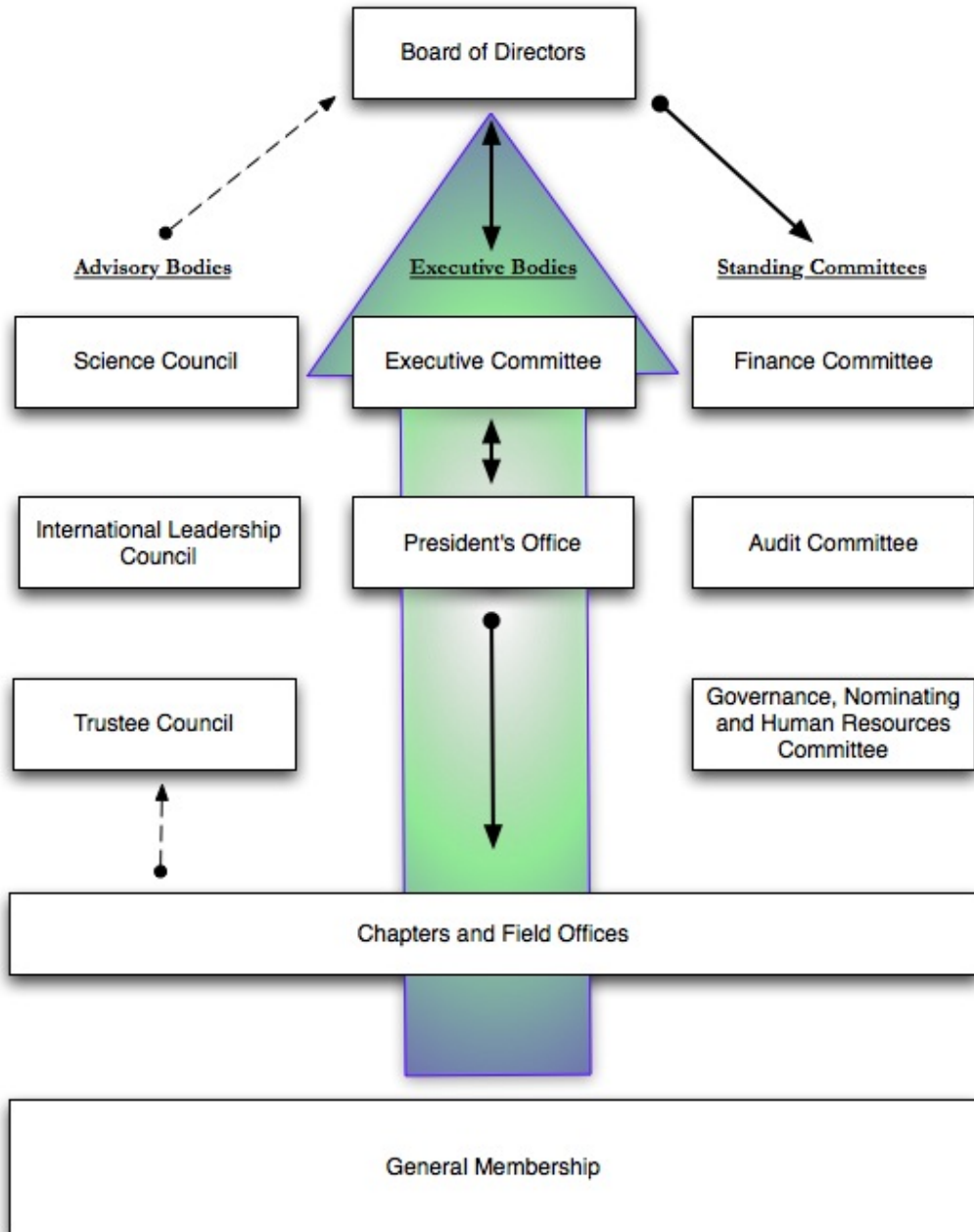


Data compiled from <http://www.nature.org/contactus/contact> and presented using Google Maps

What makes this strategic effort both possible and effective is the structure of TNC's global organization. At the grassroots level, TNC relies on a large network of chapters and field offices (see Figure 1 above). However, unlike other transnational NGOs, these entities are not autonomous. Rather, from its international headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, TNC's Board of Directors establishes each chapter and field office,

then selects a director of each site who manages its annual plan and budget. Each director reports to the President's office, which reports in turn to the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors. Volunteer Boards of Trustees assist and advise the Board in setting goals and developing strategies in support of TNC's mission.

Figure 2: TNC Organizational Structure



Source: <http://www.nature.org/aboutus/leadership/art15478.html>

Thus, the Board of Directors plays the leading role in shaping the global mission and goals of the organization. Made up of no less than nine and no more than twenty-five volunteer members, the Board bears the ultimate fiduciary responsibility for the organization. The Board meets four times per year, although the President may call additional meetings when necessary. Board members are selected to represent the varied areas of interest and expertise of the organization. The Governance, Nominating and Human Resources Committee initiates this selection process by nominating new members prior to the annual meeting of the Board, at which time the Board chooses from among the nominees by majority vote. Once selected, Board members serve for three years and are prohibited from serving more than three consecutive terms (TNC 2009d).

TNC's executive body is the Executive Committee, which exercises the powers of the Board of Directors between annual meetings. The Executive Committee consists of the Board Chair, up to three Vice Chairs, the President, Secretary, Treasurer, and the Chairs of the three standing committees: 1) Audit, 2) Finance, and 3) Governance, Nominating, and Human Resources. It has the authority to act for the Board of Directors in all respects, except the addition or alteration of bylaws and issues related to Board and Executive Committee membership. In sum, the Executive Committee implements the global goals and strategies agreed on by the Board of Directors (TNC 2009d).

To enhance the efficacy of its global conservation strategy, TNC relies on three key advisory bodies: the Science Council; the Trustee Council; and the International Leadership Council (ILC). Each advisory body represents a key stakeholder group. The Science Council represents the scientific community and is charged with providing TNC leadership with access to the cutting edge science and scientists in areas related to the

organization's diverse and global conservation mission. This Council consists of five to nine members appointed to three year terms (TNC 2009h). The Trustee Council represents the interests of state, country and regional chapters and field offices. Its purpose is to enhance communication between TNC leadership and the diverse elements of its global field operations (TNC 2009e). The ILC represents the interests of businesses and corporations by providing a corporate forum designed to develop a better understanding of the relationship between business and biodiversity. Each corporate participant purchases a membership to the ILC. As of 2009, the membership price was \$25,000 and members could designate a portion of this fee to a particular conservation initiative (TNC 2009m).

TNC's principal officer is the President. The President acts as the chief executive officer, with responsibility for providing leadership and direction to TNC and its global activities. For example, Mark Tercek, who is TNC's current President, serves on and reports to the Board of Directors as well as the Executive Committee and is the chief spokesperson for the organization (TNC 2009c). This means that TNC conforms to a presidential model of leadership, as opposed to the more traditional board-centered model, in which the president primarily serves that an implementer of board politics. In the presidential leadership model, board members, staff, and organizational members hold the president responsible for organizational successes and failures (Ott 2001). Thus, the president's office is unique in its ability to shape the organization's philosophy as well as the strategies it employs to implement and project that philosophy.

Whereas the organizational structure of most other transnational NGOs rest upon a network of autonomous national and local chapters, all of which have voting rights in

the organization's governance structure, TNC functions more like a classical hierarchical organization (Blagescu and Lloyd 2006, 29). This unique organizational structure allows TNC to remain consistent to its mission; however, its advisory boards and membership base function to keep the organization responsive to new challenges and new ways of thinking. Because all conservation work ultimately links back to the Board of Directors, TNC retains a high degree of control over its operations, which is remarkable given the organization's size and diversity. Advisory bodies keep the Board informed of problems and opportunities that emerge at the local and regional levels, thus working to ensure that decisions made by the leadership are responsive to the changing reality of conditions on the ground level. This reflexive organizational arrangement is therefore a key to understanding how and why TNC adapted over time to address a wide range of issues across a diverse range of situational contexts.

TNC and Water Conservation

TNC's foray into water resource conservation marks one of the more recent developments in this historic progression. From the outset, water resource issues have been inextricably linked to TNC's overarching concerns for forest conservation and protected areas. For instance, water was a critical concern in the Mianus River Gorge project – TNC's very first land preservation effort - where successive attempts to develop the Gorge and adjacent buffer zones threatened to degrade the quality and quantity of its free-flowing tributaries and wetlands. However, TNC viewed the preservation of these resources as instrumental to its broader land preservation goals. As such, TNC tended to frame water resources as environmental services, which meant that water preservation

was significant only to the extent that it sustained the old-growth forest of hemlock and beech and produced reliable, high quality drinking water for surrounding communities.

Throughout most of its history, TNC has been reluctant to directly take on water resource problems. As discussed below, this reluctance can be attributed to the incompatibility between TNC's traditional values and strategies, on one hand, and the nature of global water resource problems, on the other. In the words of one observer, TNC was reluctant to directly target water conservation problems because the organization felt these issues were simply "too broad, too complex, [with] too many other parties involved" (Horton 1999, 16).

By the mid 1990s, evidence of dramatic global declines in freshwater biodiversity nevertheless compelled TNC to reevaluate its position. In *A Practitioner's Guide to Freshwater Biodiversity Conservation* (2004b, 4), TNC staffer Nicole Silk attributes this re-thinking to a number of important early studies that showed "the decline in freshwater biodiversity has reached alarming rates." To reinforce this point, Silk cites several of these studies, all of which point to significant and sudden declines in the quantity and variety of freshwater species. In one such study, Moyle and Leidy (1992) examined the condition of the world's aquatic ecosystems and concluded that the rate of degradation, if left unchecked, will produce a 20% decline in global freshwater fish stockpiles by 2017. An inventory of global freshwater biodiversity undertaken several years later found, among other things, that nearly 60% of freshwater dolphins and 70% of freshwater otters are either vulnerable or endangered (McAllister, Hamilton, and Harvey 1997). Follow-up studies established the extinction rate of freshwater biodiversity to be as much as five times faster than all other groups of species and that 20% to 35% of all freshwater species

are either endangered, threatened or have recently gone extinct (Gleick, Cohen, and Mann 2002; Ricciardi and Joseph 1999).

By 1998, this body of evidence convinced TNC to undertake its first global Freshwater Initiative. Its long-term goal was to maintain the ecological integrity of key river systems while also making sure that water needs are met for municipalities, agricultural production, flood control and hydropower (Sawhill 1999; Silk 2004b). In the short-term, TNC structured the Initiative as a five-year capacity-building program, during which time TNC set out to identify key areas of freshwater biodiversity, devise strategies to arrest and repair biodiversity decline, and establish partnerships with key stakeholders. TNC staffed this program with a team of 15 scientists and lawyers then tasked them with the additional challenge of raising \$10 million to fund water conservation work (Silk 2004a). Disbanded in 2003, work continued for a time through TNC's Sustainable Waters Program. This Program is a ten-year effort to ensure that at least 30 state governments in the United States and 10 other countries adopt and implement adequate environmental flow policies (TNC 2009s). Over time, TNC has added the following seven water conservation goals and subsumed these diverse efforts under the general heading of its Freshwater Conservation Initiative:

- Reducing the ecological impact of dams
- Reconnecting floodplains with rivers
- Protecting watersheds and water supplies for cities
- Promoting sustainable agricultural practices
- Protecting coastal rivers and estuaries
- Guarding freshwater ecosystems from invasive species
- Sustaining ecosystem resilience to climate change

Today, there are seventeen scientists, lawyers and administrative personnel who staff this global Initiative, which is headquartered in Boulder, Colorado.

TNC in Global Water Governance

Thus far, this discussion revealed the process through which TNC transformed from a small and national organization to a large and global one. At this point, the analysis shifts to a focus on the points of continuity and difference within this transformation. Specifically, this analysis inquires into TNC's interest in global water resource problems and the role this interest played in shaping TNC's behavior over time. The purpose of this analysis is not simply to demonstrate the role that TNC plays in the governance of global water resources nor is it primarily to recount how the organization changed over time. Rather, the principal aim is to examine the ontological, political, and axiological dimension of TNC in order to adjudicate competing theoretical claims regarding how GCS fits in the history of world politics.

Political Ontology

In his study of political ontology, Colin Hay (2006) reminds us that ontological assumptions and perceptions are logically antecedent to our discourse and actions. This is so because ontological choices are critical for determining the character, nature, and "reality" of ontological entities on the global stage. As a philosophical act, a political ontology shapes our understanding of what exists politically and how these political entities hang together. As a practical matter, ontological choices shape the way that actors understand their place in the world political system. This is significant because it determines which entities an actor perceives as allies and which it perceives as foes, a philosophical matter with practical strategic implications. Consequently, considerations of political ontology are key to understanding how transnational NGOs fit in the history of world politics.

TNC perceives the world political system as a single social formation but also as one that is fragmented into unnatural and therefore unsustainable political entities. This political ontology flows from TNC's overarching concern for the "intricate connections among environmental health, natural diversity, our economies and human wellbeing" (Tercek 2009). Too often, our political units were created with little or no regard for the natural conditions in which they are embedded. Considerations of global freshwater ecosystems make this point explicit. Indeed, New Zealand is the only country in the world with watershed-based political units ("Resource Management Act 1991" 1991). Elsewhere, watersheds are subdivided into local, national and regional boundaries that bear little or no correlation to the environmental reality in which they are embedded. Consequently, "dialogues, policies and programs focused on integrated water resources management, poverty alleviation, or sustainable development have not adequately taken ecosystem water needs into consideration" (TNC 2009u).

This singular and disjointed ontology shapes TNC's actions. This fact is demonstrated most clearly in TNC's preference for collaborative rather than contentious political action. Operating from the premise that "what is good for nature is good for people" (TNC 2009u), TNC perceives its role within this fragmented and disordered world political system as a builder of coalitions. Its political goal is to demonstrate "that human needs and prosperity can be fully realized while maintaining the health of freshwater ecosystems, if ecosystem water needs are fully integrated into water planning and management" (TNC 2009u). To bridge the political divides that cause and perpetuate environmental degradation, TNC argues it is important to collaborate with these key stakeholders. This means that TNC works with local actors, the scientific

community, water managers and other important resource managers, as well as states and business leaders. While this conversation reveals important information about the way TNC pursues its objectives, the overarching point here is to reveal how TNC views the world. To advance this objective, the discussion now turns to a more detailed analysis of TNC's interactions with key actors. This discussion contributes insights to the relationship between ontology and action that will prove relevant to the congruence analysis that follows.

Collaboration with local and indigenous groups

Indeed, a key to TNC's overarching strategy is to build community partnerships in order to generate widespread support for its broader global Freshwater Conservation Initiative. To do this, TNC endeavors to earn the confidence and trust of local communities by developing conservation strategies from the ground up. As one Conservancy staffer put it, "When they [water managers] ask how much water do critters need, we [TNC] ask how much do humans need and figure out how to meet these needs with the least amount of damage possible" (Horton 1999, 16). This grassroots and participatory approach is intended to greatly amplify the positive impact of TNC's conservation efforts. In considering this issue, former Conservancy President Mark Sawhill (1997, 9) argued that a collaborative approach is not just the most convenient solution to conservation problems, but it also the best solution: "local people have to provide the leadership to protect the natural heritage of these countries, and we can best advance that goal by providing these people with training, tools, and resources." Therefore, for TNC, "the answer in addressing problems in natural rather than political scales lies in community-based conservation" (McCormick 2000, 4).

By allocating the resources necessary to elicit the preferences, perceptions and values of local stakeholders, TNC strives to unleash and leverage the “latent power of a community’s love of place” (McCormick 2000, 4). For example, on the Micronesian Island of Pohnpei, TNC supported a two-year study of local village attitudes about water resources, and, having gained the trust of local stakeholders, was able to educate villagers on the negative consequences of particular activities within local watershed. This effort led to the creation of community management committees and the training of Community Conservation Officers, developments which promise to formalize the rules and regulations for watershed management within local communities and thereby foster local participation in water management decisions (Birchard 2005, 189-191; Raynor 1998). In Belize, TNC works with the Toledo Institute for Development and Environment, a local conservation organization, to enlist and train indigenous peoples to monitor water quality within the aquatic ecosystems stretching between the Maya Mountains and the coastal reef (TNC 2009n). And in China’s Yunnan Province, TNC provides low-cost methane production systems to local villagers in an effort to help prevent river contamination related to deforestation (Gaetz 1999; Sawhill 1999).

Collaboration with states

By adopting a community-based strategy informed by the natural sciences, TNC has quickly built up the reputation as a global expert on issues of freshwater conservation. Over time, this reputation enabled TNC to enlist other organizations, powerful states, and international institutions to its cause. For example, TNC receives funding and assistance from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) for a variety of watershed-related projects in Ecuador’s Condor Biopreserve (discussed

below) and the Panama Canal watershed. As another example of its transnational influence, in 2002 TNC developed an eco-regional conservation plan that guided World Bank funding to water conservation work in Guatemala. And in 2004, TNC hosted a conference of Latin American leaders entitled “Water: Source of Life, Development and Peace”, which featured discussions on the subject of water use fees and watershed conservation (TNC 2004, 55).

TNC views these collaborative arrangements as essential to achieving its conservation objectives. As one observer notes, “from our first government ‘co-op’ in the sixties to the state land-for-conservation bond issues of the eighties and since, it was increasingly plain that only in partnership with government could we hope to achieve some of our goals” (Blair Jr. 1991). Today, TNC argues that these experiences led to the conclusion that to achieve success, global conservation strategies “must include partnerships with governments, lending institutions, and other non-governmental organizations at all levels local, national and international” (TNC 2009l).

Collaboration with NGOs and businesses

In addition to its collaborations with local groups and governments, TNC also frequently pursues its freshwater conservation goals in collaboration with key players in the NGO and business sectors. For instance, TNC is currently collaborating with the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) and Stanford University to develop the economic tools needed to accurately assess ecosystem services (Meeks 2008; TNC 2006). By thus “recognizing that ecosystems should be protected for their intrinsic values as well as their economic values,” TNC argues it will be better positioned to “prioritize the conservation of the

world's natural systems. This, in turn, can help improve the quality of life for people throughout the world" (TNC 2006)

TNC partners in the business sector provide financial and land donations, engage in cause-related marketing, foster direct conservation action, and participate in event sponsorship (TNC 2009I). For example, TNC partnered with Dow Chemical to conduct restoration work on 855 acres of wetlands near Brazil's Cachoeira reservoir (TNC 2008). In this arrangement, Dow provided \$1.5 million for an ecosystem survey of the area and the implementation of a community based effort to begin restoration work (Dow 2009). In return, Dow will receive carbon credits to offset its corporate emissions (TNC 2009f).

In conclusion, this discussion of collaboration reveals that the pursuit of collaborative solutions rather than contentious activities is not merely a matter of political expediency but is instead a behavior that is more deeply ingrained in the ontological core of the organization. Regardless of the actors it encounters in the pursuit of its goals, TNC does not question whether it should collaborate but asks only with whom it should collaborate and how. As a consequence, TNC is not given to the types of headline-grabbing political activism of organizations like Greenpeace or Earth First. Instead, its ontology leads TNC to adopt behaviors that position it in the political shadows of environmental debates. It would, however, be a mistake to infer from this that TNC is an ineffective political actor. On the contrary, the evidence below indicates that the TNC has grown from its ontological roots into one of the largest and most successful environmental NGOs in the world.

Axiology: The Defensive Compromise

Whereas political ontology is about what exists in world politics and how an individual or organization relates to these entities, values are about the things an individual or organization holds as good. Considerations of value are key to revealing the way transnational NGOs fit in the history of world politics because they expose the level of import that values play in guiding not just what these organizations think but also what they do.

At the core of TNC's conservation work is its commitment to preserving the "plants, animals, and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and water they need to survive" (TNC 1990, 5). Until recently, TNC understood this to mean that nature possesses *intrinsic* value, which is to say that all forms of species-life and all their interrelations possess a value independent of any usefulness they may offer for human purposes. This means that TNC interpreted every extinction event and every reduction in the richness and diversity of nature as the severing of "strands from the web of life" (Sawhill 1995, 5). To guard against such losses, TNC initially set out to preserve and protect threatened species and their habitats. Over time, however, these activities have developed into a broader effort to restore and maintain the integrity of entire ecosystems.

TNC's other key values developed organically from this core ecocentric concern for the intrinsic value of nature. For example, this ecocentric foundation informs TNC's commitment to science, which functions as a way of reducing the complexity and diversity of nature and the human-nature relationship to a concrete set of tangible and solvable problems – solvable, that is, if you have the right training. Ecology, biology, hydrology, and the science of natural resource management guide TNC decision-making

in every aspect of its operations, from setting priorities to making strategies to taking action to measuring results (TNC 2010). Because TNC has traditionally prioritized the needs of nature over the needs of people, the fact that it privileged an exclusionary scientific discourse was viewed as more of a strength than a weakness.

Yet, for a variety of reasons, these values made TNC ill-suited for meeting the particular challenges of freshwater conservation. Whereas its traditional approach focused on saving species and biotic communities by buying up and protecting critical habitat, it is difficult if not impossible to buy up an entire river. Even if it was possible to purchase an aquatic ecosystem, it is unlikely that the area would be in pristine condition. It is generally the case that people want to build their homes and businesses along streams and rivers, which means that there are few untrammelled aquatic ecosystems left to preserve. Additionally, population growth and changes in consumption patterns tend to generate competition for water, which makes the water resource issue as much a political as a technical problem. Thus, the challenge of conserving freshwater ecosystems is not about a strict ecocentric delineation between society and nature, nor is it fundamentally a scientific problem; rather, it is about “managing the human uses in and around them” (Birchard 2005, 81).

Thus, in setting out to protect aquatic ecosystems, TNC thrust itself into a paradigmatic crisis. The question was, “should TNC remain true to its values or to its objectives?” Some might object that posing the question in this way constitutes a false dilemma, which is to say that it papers over other alternative options. However, there are key personnel within TNC leadership who have defined the problem in just this way. On one hand, there is a strong contingent that argues TNC’s mission is not about helping

people but about conserving biodiversity (Weeks 1997). These individuals argue that attempts to behave differently should be viewed as mission drift or just plain funding opportunism. Others argue that “if you want to protect biodiversity you need to give local residents a stake in preserving it” (Lloyd 2006, 27). Former Conservancy President Steve McCormick adopted this latter approach, counseling Conservancy members: “we . . . must be wary of letting our idealism blind us to the real world in which our work must be grounded” (McCormick 2006).

In order to reconcile these competing factions, TNC has adopted a defensive compromise: it stopped articulating its ecocentric philosophy publicly in order to retain credibility and standing among opponents of these principles and to attract new partnerships with key stakeholders (Naess 1995, 65). TNC feared that were it to persist in voicing its ecocentric value the organization might be in danger of losing influence and status among those who are in charge of overall policies (Naess 1995, 65). Yet, in private, TNC staff continue to feel the need for deeper and more profound changes, even though many no longer articulate this concern publicly². Thus, whereas its traditional values led TNC to prioritize the needs of species and ecosystems, today it claims to value and even privilege the needs of local communities, which it argues are key to TNC’s continued success (Sawhill 1998, 6).

For TNC, this development is akin to a scientific revolution. According to Kuhn, a scientific revolution occurs when a community rejects “one time-honored theory in favor of another incompatible with it” (Kuhn 1996, 6). This process ends with a wholesale transformation of the way this community undertakes its work, which involves everything from what it considers an admissible problem to the criteria legitimating

² This claim is based on interviews with TNC staff.

problem-solutions (Kuhn 1996). This process is on display within TNC as it rejects the idea of protecting nature *from* people in favor of promoting the idea of protecting nature *for* people (McCormick 2005, 5). TNC's Freshwater Conservation Initiative has been a catalyst in this development. This is both due to the particular characteristics of freshwater resources as well as the global scale of water resource problems.

While this paradigmatic struggle still rages it seems that the human-centered viewpoint will prevail, at least for the time-being. To crystallize this transition, in 2007 TNC adopted a new organizational symbol and a new motto (Figure 3). The symbol shows TNC's green leaves enveloping the Earth, signaling the global scope of its mission and activities. The new motto, "Protecting nature. Preserving life" marks a clear break from the former maxim, "Saving the Last Great Places." Although the emphasis on protecting nature signals the global scope of its conservation mission, the stress on preserving life designates the object of its conservation efforts. TNC seeks to protect nature in order to preserve life. Thus, what the new motto signifies is the shift from an ecocentric conception of nature to one that is instrumental, in which the value of nature consists in the real or potential contribution it offers to all life, but especially human life.

Figure 3: Nature Conservancy Logos



Old TNC logo

Source: <http://support.nature.org/archive/200412.htm>



New TNC logo

Source: <http://www.nature.org>

Further evidence of this paradigm shift is on display in TNC's recent move to articulate the value of water as an ecosystem service. This effort endeavors to redefine freshwater resources and the aquatic ecosystems they sustain as vital assets, the purpose of which is to prompt people and institutions to recognize and appreciate the roles these assets play in supporting human well being, and, ultimately, to induce decision-makers to incorporate these concerns into the decision-making process (Daily, et al. 2009, 21). This discursive shift, which seeks to explicate both the monetary *and* non-monetary values of water, effectively supplants TNC's former articulation of an intrinsic or inherent value to water/nature with one that defines water/nature in accordance with its instrumental value.

Traditionally, ecocentrics expressed the value of nature in ethical terms. For instance, Aldo Leopold established a strong ecocentric position when he argued that an ethical obligation offers the only visible remedy to the hopelessly lopsided logic of economic self-interest. Leopold (1989, 224-225) summed up this ecocentric ethic as follows: "a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." The effort to redefine freshwater resources as ecosystem services constitutes an attempt to shortcut the more difficult ethical path to valuing nature. Thus, on this discursive level, the valuation of water as an ecosystem service marks a strategic move to reconfigure the everyday cost benefit analysis that guides water resource decision-making from one that bases the value of water on an assumption of long-term intrinsic value to one that rests instead on a more short-term and utilitarian assessment of value. Put differently, the issue is no longer that we should preserve nature for its own sake but rather that we must conserve nature for the

satisfaction of real or potential human needs and desires. The result is that a utilitarian assessment results in a far less comprehensive level of environmental protection.

Political Behavior

Chapter three demonstrated that considerations of political behavior or strategy are also essential for uncovering the way GCS fits in the history of world politics by demonstrating how an organization attains and exercises power. As chapters one and two made clear, power is the key to understanding world politics. Whereas considerations of political ontology and values exposed the philosophical origins of power, considerations of strategy reveal the technologies of power, that is, the points at which intentions are exercised through real and effective practices (Foucault and Gordon 1980).

Under its original mandate, TNC relied most heavily on its traditional strategy of land acquisition. It sought out land containing representative examples of vital ecosystems and/or rare species then set about raising money to buy and protect the land. Whenever possible, it also bought the land bordering vital areas to create protective buffer zones between the core and the human activities that endanger it. When buying land was not an option, TNC tried to buy or negotiate conservation easements instead. Conservation easements allow private landowners to claim tax deductions and receive other forms of compensation. In return, the land owners accept restrictions on the future development potential of their land. This strategy has the added benefit of allowing TNC to pursue its conservation objectives in a manner consistent with its preference for cooperative and apolitical solutions. As measured in crude terms of acres preserved, this strategy has been hugely successful. According to TNC, it has used this land acquisition

approach to save over 119 million acres and 5,000 miles of river worldwide in the fifty plus years since its founding (TNC 2009b).

The peculiar nature of freshwater resource problems forced TNC to modify its strategic approach. As noted above, a land acquisition strategy is poorly suited for solving biodiversity problems involving large, politically fragmented, and/or highly developed river corridors and watersheds. More often than not, pristine land adjoining a river or stream is in short supply and expensive. As one Conservancy staffer put it, “there’s nothing in real estate that’s quite so appealing as water, and that’s what developers go for first” (Tanner 1988, 11). Additionally, aquatic ecosystems commonly fall within multiple and overlapping political jurisdictions. It is not uncommon for a single river to travel across multiple states nor is it uncommon for a river to fall under the jurisdiction of several local and national agencies. Furthermore, securing the integrity of aquatic ecosystems is more about restoration than preservation. According to one study, human impacts on the hydrological environment have increased nine-fold since 1950 (Postel and Richter 2003, 199). Because many of the world’s river systems are heavily developed and/or dammed, there are few untrammelled aquatic ecosystems left to preserve. Third, water resource problems are bound up in relations of wealth, knowledge and power, in which the goals of competing factions are often incommensurate. More and more, stakeholders perceive the governance of water as a zero-sum game, which is another way of saying that TNC’s preference for apolitical and cooperative solutions is often difficult to achieve within the domain of freshwater resource conservation (Sawhill 1999).

It is difficult to know if values shape strategy or vice versa. Whatever the case may be, TNC's adaptation to this unfamiliar strategic environment coincided with the defensive compromise described above. However, in its strategic adaptation TNC appeared to conform to a Lakatosian model of progress as a succession of incremental changes over time. Unlike Kuhn, Imre Lakatos argued that progress radiates outward from a 'hard core' of shared ideas or practices. Thus, progress is more of a cumulative and adaptive process than the kind of punctuated equilibrium envisioned by Kuhn (Lakatos 1978). In a Lakatosian formulation, new ideas, strategies or ways of knowing build upon and modify our traditional ways of thinking and doing; they do not constitute a wholesale replacement.

Although TNC's strategic repertoire developed across the dimensions of time and space, its land acquisition approach still constitutes the "hard core" of TNC's ecological work. Put simply, this means TNC continues to buy and protect land that contains or buffers representative examples of aquatic biodiversity. Nevertheless, TNC has augmented this land acquisition strategy over time by expanding into education, ecosystem monitoring and restoration, and conservation finance. In order to illustrate this strategic shift, the discussion turns next to an examination of TNC's water-related activities in Ecuador's Condor Bioserve, which TNC classifies as one of its demonstration sites. This examination of TNC's ecological work set the stage for the discussions of its strategic efforts in the domains of science and public policy that follow.

Ecological Work: The Condor Bioserve

TNC's work in the Condor Bioserve offers a good example of its multifaceted strategic approach. The Bioserve is a patchwork of six protected areas in Ecuador's Northern

Andean mountains that contains the headwaters of six significant watersheds and twenty major rivers. These watersheds support a wide assortment of plant and animal species, including endangered species, such as the Andean condor, the speckled bear, and the mountain tapir. They also supply roughly seventy percent of the water for Quito's 1.8 million inhabitants (TNC 2009g).

Despite its importance, the Bioreserve is really only a park on paper; Ecuador enshrined these parks in national law but did not allocate the resources to protect them. Today, inappropriate agricultural practices and poorly conceived infrastructure projects threaten the integrity of the Bioreserve's vital aquatic ecosystems. To create new cattle pastures or support subsistence agriculture, commercial and residential farmers cut further and further into its high plateaus (TNC 2009j). These activities destabilized fragile soils, which means more runoff and therefore heavier sediment loads in adjacent streams and rivers. By failing to fully consider the environmental impacts of their infrastructure projects within the Bioreserve, utility companies, municipalities and other entities made these problems worse (Clark and Padwe 2004; Ziegelmayr, Clark, and Nyce 2004). The roads, dams and water distribution systems they built in or near the Bioreserve often increase the rate of soil erosion, leading to further reductions in water quality (TNC 2009j).

With support from the US Agency for International Development (USAID), in 1994 TNC set out to protect the Condor Biosphere Reserve as part of its broader Parks in Peril Program. Working through local conservation groups, TNC hired, equipped and trained local villagers to patrol the parks; it marked the park's boundaries; and it purchased strategic buffer zones adjacent to the Bioreserve (TNC 2009g). On one hand,

this endeavor reinforces the point made above regarding TNC's collaborative approach to problem solving. On the other hand, while these collaborative efforts achieved marginal reductions in the rate of resource degradation, it quickly became apparent that the scale and depth of the problem warranted a more dramatic, more comprehensive approach.

In 1998, TNC responded by identifying the Condor Bioreserve as a demonstration site for its first Global Freshwater Initiative (TNC 2009j). Having already secured financial support from USAID and cultivated durable partnerships with an indigenous group, local community organizations, municipal governments and government agencies, TNC set out to develop these relationships into a broad base of support for advancing its water conservation efforts (Krchnak 2007). These efforts included education and restoration work (USAID 2009); however, the primary thrust of TNC's work involved the development of a financial mechanism to support watershed protection and restoration projects.

TNC argued that further degradation of these watersheds would lead to lower quality water, thereby necessitating higher cost water treatment techniques (Krchnak 2007, 7). To address this problem, TNC created a trust fund financed through the assessment of water user fees. TNC rationalized user fees as payments for ecosystem services. By using the money generated through these fees to promote the conservation of upstream areas, downstream users benefit by receiving lower cost access to higher quality water (Krchnak 2007, 7). In 2000, this initiative was institutionalized in the form of the Quito Water Fund, or FONAG (Fundo Para la Conservacion del Aqua). Today the Fund generates roughly \$1 million per year to support watershed restoration projects, monitoring and evaluation work, and incentives for adopting appropriate agricultural

techniques (TNC 2009p). Thus by altering the incentive structures attached to water allocation and provision, TNC endeavors to modify the preferences, perceptions and values of water users to align more closely with its conservation goals.

Scientific Models

In addition to its ecological work, TNC develops scientific models to shape the ways in which water managers identify and solve resource problems. Over time, TNC used its ecological work to build scientific methods of calculating the ecological limits of hydrological alterations and low cost tools for identifying areas of critical need within aquatic ecosystems (TNC 2009i, 2009r). It also developed sustainable farming practices that reduce water withdrawals and watershed contamination (TNC 2009k). TNC provides these methodologies and scientific tools to decision-makers at little or no cost by providing easy access to the information through conferences and trainings, publications, and via its website nature.org. According to TNC, the goal of these efforts is not to reduce political decision-making to a scientific formula. On the contrary, it explicitly recognizes that “the process of balancing competing interests is not scientific but should be informed by science” (LCAOF 1995, 32). Ultimately, “local people have to provide the leadership to protect the natural heritage of these countries, and we can best advance that goal by providing these people with training, tools and resources” (Sawhill 1997, 9). To be absolutely clear, what Sawhill refers to here are local decision-makers, meaning local water resource managers.

Policy Proposals

However, TNC does more than merely offer support; in recent years it also supplemented its core land acquisition strategy by attempting to directly influence the rules, norms and

decision-making procedures of global water governance. This global policy dimension of its strategic repertoire focuses on two issue areas: environmental flows and payment for ecosystem services.

The concept of environmental flow describes “the quantity, timing and quality of water flows required to sustain freshwater and estuarine ecosystems and the human livelihoods and well-being that depend on these ecosystems” (Brisbane Declaration 2007, Appendix 1). TNC has played a key role in establishing the concept of environmental flows as a crucial consideration in the global governance of water resources (Poff 2009). In 2007, TNC headed up an effort to unite over 750 scientists, water managers and policy makers from around the world behind a collective call to action for greater global protection and restoration of environmental flows (TNC 2009v). This effort led to the Brisbane Declaration (2007), which calls upon governments, development banks, donors, river basin organizations, water and energy associations, multilateral and bilateral institutions, community-based organizations, research institutions, and the private sector across the globe to integrate environmental flow considerations into every aspect of their decision-making and implementation strategies. Essentially, the Declaration endeavors to move discussions of environmental flows beyond the domain of science by cajoling governments to take immediate action to protect and restore rivers and the aquatic ecosystems they sustain (TNC 2009v). At the domestic level, TNC scientists have worked in concert with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to improve the environmental health of several rivers in the United States (Poff, Richter, and Arthington 2010; Richter, Warner, and Meyer 2006)

By focusing attention on the services ecosystems provide, TNC has also taken steps to determine the economic value of these services as a means of influencing water resource decision-making processes. In the words of former TNC President Steven J. McCormick (2009), this effort endeavors to take “land and water protection a step beyond traditional emotional appeals to preserve our natural heritage by making an economic and business case for conservation.” TNC has pursued this objective by experimenting with the use of water funds in key demonstration sites then leveraging these experiences to promote their payment for ecosystem services (PES) scheme as a norm or standard of global water governance. This adoption of PES schemes was consistent with a global wave of innovation in small-scale economic instruments that introduced new incentives and disincentives designed to induce behavioral changes tied to the extraction and pollution of natural resources, such as water, forests, and air (Chan, Shaw, Cameron, Underwood, and Daily 2006; Jack, Kousky, and Sims 2008; Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005). Thus, the application of PES schemes by TNC are now part of a broader trend, a trend which reinforced in the U.S. when, in 2008, Congress created the Office of Ecosystem Services and Markets in the Department of Agriculture, and when, in the same year, the United Nations sponsored an Intergovernmental Science Policy-Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (Nature 2009).

But in the specific area of water resources governance, TNC has emerged as a global leader in the creation and implementation of PES models. For example, in Brazil TNC is attempting to protect threatened watersheds by paying farmers to replant trees along riverbanks deforested for soybean and cattle production. To fund this program, TNC works with water utilities in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, which levy a fee on

water users there. This user fee pays upstream farmers \$28 per acre, per year, for keeping their riverside forests standing (TNC 2009p). TNC has leveraged its success with this Brazilian case by expanding this Water Producer Program to other South American countries, including Ecuador, Peru, and Columbia (TNC 2009q).

Congruence Analysis

What does this information tell us about the role GCS plays in the history of global water governance and world politics? Does this evidence support the transformationalist claim that the emergence of global civil society marks an ontological break in world political history by de-centering state and markets as the dominant actors in the world political system? Alternatively, does it support pragmatic assertions that the development GCS marks a historic break in the size and diffusion of the strategic repertoire? Or, as a final option, can we rely on this evidence to support the critical proposition that GCS marks an axiological break in the history of global water governance by reducing the global heterogeneity in values and cultural understandings?

Transformationalist Framework

Of the three theoretical frameworks, transformationalists' expectations about the role of GCS are the most incongruent in the TNC case. Transformationalists ground their observations on the assumption that GCS consists of individuals and actors that act as a check on the depredations of states and markets. Regardless of whether they perceive GCS as normatively progressive (Keane 2003) or conservative (Lipschutz 2007), transformationalists universally perceive it as a contentious and ontologically transformative political sphere. To analyze the concrete empirical evidence with these abstract theoretical claims, we need only ask two questions: Does GCS function as a

check on the authority of state and market forces? And, if so, does it perform this function in a contentious manner?

In this case, there is very little empirical support for this transformationalist position. Transformationalists might point to the Brisbane Declaration as a contentious political action, the purpose of which is to check the water resource decision-making authority of states and water managers by drawing global attention to the water resource needs of aquatic ecosystems. However, the fact that so many state officials participated in drafting the Declaration suggests that the Declaration itself is not so much a check on state authority as it is a means of legitimizing and extending this authority. Thus, it was through this cooperative and collaborative endeavor that TNC effectively normalized the already privileged position of the existing power structure.

Considerations of ecological work (Wapner 1996) and cultural influence (Wapner 2002) ostensibly offers transformationalists' firmer ground on which to base their claim that organizations like TNC transform the ontology of world politics. It might appear that in reconfiguring cultural understandings of water in places like Pohnpei, TNC's behavior is congruent with the transformationalist assertion that GCS acts as a check on the cultural authority of states and markets. Moreover, because TNC approaches its ecological work in places like Ecuador, Panama or Brazil from the ontological perspective that what exists in the world is a dysfunctional and unnatural political structure, its efforts to fully integrate ecological realities into political decision-making practices might also appear congruent with transformationalists' claim that GCS de-centers the role of state in markets within the world political system. However, the fact that TNC pursues these strategies is in and of itself insufficient to support such a claim.

To make this move, a transformationalist must demonstrate that such activities are contentious, that is, that they are contrary to the interests of states and markets. Lacking this, GCS may prove to be little more than an appendage of these more traditional spheres of global politics. In this case, TNC's aversion to conflict coupled with its extensive history of collaboration with state and market forces means that there is insufficient evidence to support the transformationalist perspective.

Pragmatic Framework

Because pragmatists shrug off considerations of values to focus solely on political and strategic dynamics, their framework avoids many of the theoretical problems that plague transformationalists and critical theorists. Instead, their goal has been to show how GCS fosters new relationships for learning, relationships that translate into new opportunities to gain influence within the world political system.

Evidence of this behavior is ubiquitous in the TNC case. Prominent examples include TNC's participation in the Brisbane Conference, its efforts to create and promote PES schemes, and through its continued efforts to fully integrate the principles of ecosystem science into water resources management and planning (Poff, et al. 2010). It is also evident in its collaboration with indigenous groups and local NGOs, most of which provide political support for its domestic and global environmental initiatives. This behavior is not merely strategic but is instead an artifact of TNC's political ontology and is therefore congruent with pragmatic expectations. It demonstrates that TNC possesses both a high organizational capacity for learning and strategic innovation as well as the motivation to collaborate with a diverse range of actors in the pursuit of its objectives. It demonstrates as well the pragmatic insight to the important role GCS plays

in facilitating the formation of knowledge-based networks of specialists with shared beliefs in cause-and-effect relations (Haas 1992; Keck and Sikkink 1998a). Not only is the characteristic inherent to TNC's organizational structure, it is also evident in many of TNC's activities. From its first undertaking in the Mianus Gorge, the TNC established a pattern of collaborative behavior by working in concert with local conservation organizations and federal agencies to safeguard the vital ecosystem functions that purify and sustain the Mianus River. It is evident as well in its collaborations with Dow Chemical, from which the TNC secured \$1.5 million for restoration work on Brazil's Cachoeira reservoir. Finally, it is evident in TNC's extensive history of collaboration with state agencies like USAID, a relationship that proved instrumental in launching its efforts in the Condor Biopreserve.

However, this evidence also suggests that the pragmatic emphasis on institutional influence may be overstated. While TNC's involvement in the Brisbane Declaration makes it clear that the organization desires greater influence in the domain of global water politics, it is also evident that the totality of its global political endeavors cannot be reduced to the singular pursuit of institutional influence. From its land purchases in Ecuador to its methane stoves in China, so much of what TNC does has little or nothing to do with gaining such influence on the world political stage. Rather, these efforts can only be explained in relation to the specific goal TNC pursues, which is to preserve and restore ecosystem integrity and biodiversity. That TNC sometimes leverages these efforts and experiences to gain influence is ancillary. In other words, for TNC influence is not an end but is rather a means to an end – and in some occasions it is not a necessary means. Thus, while pragmatists' expectations are congruent with the behavior of TNC,

the pragmatic approach is not fully satisfactory for understanding how GCS fits in the history of world politics.

Critical Framework

The evidence presented above also appears to support the critical thesis that GCS primarily functions as a means of normalizing the interests and perceptions of a hegemonic global class, a process that obliterates the diverse values of the many to extend the privileges of the few (Carr and Norman 2008; Pasha and Blaney 1998; Stevis 2005). The flexibility of its core values combined with its preference for market-based solutions certainly make TNC vulnerable to such a charge. Critics have interpreted its close ties to multinational corporations and powerful state interests as contrary to the very meaning of environmentalism. For example, Johann Hari (2010, 19) argues that these relationships signify a kind of creeping corporate corruption. “They are supporting a system they know will lead to ecocide,” Hari writes, “because more revenue will run through their accounts, for a while, as the collapse occurs.” Problems with TNCs corporate and state relations are only compounded by its outspoken support for market mechanisms, like its payment for ecosystem services scheme. This strategy is seen as particularly onerous because it turns the polluter pays principle on its head, replacing it with an inherently unjust system that rewards polluters with the money of their victims (Pagiola, et al. 2004; Wunder, et al. 2008).

On the other hand, there are some elements of TNC’s approach to water resource governance that critical theorists would find appealing. For example, TNC has established strong and durable relationships with the local and indigenous communities that live on or near its sites. TNC started this tradition of collaboration in the Mianus

Gorge and carried over elements of this tradition into the transnational sphere. Today, TNC actively works with several local groups in Ecuador by providing them with scientific data and material resources. In return, TNC has gained the trust and support of key local stakeholders. In addition, TNC has gained important insight to the cultural and political challenges involved in modifying the behaviors of the people who are part of the ecosystems they are struggling to save. In Ecuador the challenge was to get local communities to buy in to its PES schemes, but in Pohnpei and China the challenges are different. In these locations, the challenge was to first alert people to the fact that a problem exists. Next, TNC faced the challenge of educating local populations on the ways in which they contribute to the problem before offering them a range of appropriate solutions to address the problem.

Of course, critical theorists will likely object to such claims. They would argue instead that the costs of TNC's strategic partnerships with Dow Chemical and other multinational corporations far outweigh the benefits gained from its other various small-scale collaborative endeavors. However, such criticisms ultimately rest on its myopic focus on the diversity of values and cultural understandings. Critical theorists argue that deliberative democracy and expanded participation ought to be the watchwords for every issue and every process related to the global governance of water resources. However, there is a tipping point beyond which the degree of urgency and/or the knowledge of local actors argues against their inclusion in the decision-making process. In the final analysis it is not the size of the decision-making body that matters most. Rather, what often matters most is the criteria by which we can delineate between legitimate and illegitimate claims. In large part, this shortcoming is a throwback to the critical

theoretical concern for environmental justice. Indeed, in matters of human health it is rational to expect people to possess some knowledge about their general health and the sources of environmental degradation that make them sick (Low and Gleeson 1998). In contrast, critical theorists are less justified in make similar claims about the issues related to ecological justice. Many people know little or nothing about the complex interactions that are essential to the functioning of nearby ecosystems and less still about the policy tools available for solving these problems. It is in such occasions that it is preferable to rely on the analysis and problem-solving recommendation of the area experts.

Critical theorists might object that an ecological conception of justice is a peculiar and Western idea, which tends to privilege non-democratic and “institutionalized attempts to capture and contain the forces of Nature by operationally deploying advanced technologies, and thereby linking many of Nature's apparently intrinsic structures and processes to strategies of highly rationalized environmental management” (Latour 2004; Luke 1996). However, these observations bow under the weight of their own normative and methodological biases. TNC is not principally concerned with environmental justice, just as it is not particularly concerned about the means it uses to achieve its objectives. What TNC does care about is preserving the beauty and integrity of biotic ecosystems and it is willing to utilize a variety of means to achieve this end. This perhaps explains why TNC is just as willing to collaborate with indigenous groups as it is with multinational corporations, and just as willing to support regulatory solutions as it is market-based mechanisms. Yet, because critical theorists privilege process over outcome, environmental justice over ecological justice, and diversity over, well, everything, there is a strong tendency among critical theorists to prejudge the merits of an

actor and her actions. However, there is no more basis for making the claim that the diversity of values and cultural understandings possesses greater intrinsic value than the diversity of species. We should assume nothing but ask instead whether there are moments when the need to save nature trumps the need to feed people. When such moments exist, it would be hard to justify foregoing a rapid and targeted response in favor of a more drawn out deliberative process. In some cases, this is precisely the kind of challenge TNC faces. In sum, critical theory provides important insights to the way this organization fits in the world political system, but these insights unfortunately suffer from the failure to assess this organization on its own terms.

Conclusion

How can TNC and its Freshwater Conservation Initiative help us adjudicate the theoretical debate over GCS and the roles it plays both in global water governance and world politics? First and foremost, TNC's behavior demonstrates that GCS plays an important role in directing attention to the ecological dimensions of global water governance. In this respect, TNC has been instrumental both as a strategic innovator and policy advocate. But perhaps its most important contribution consists in its ecological work. For the most part, this work has focused on harmonizing the relationships "among environmental health, natural diversity, our economies and human wellbeing" (Tercek 2009). To advance this goal, TNC has pursued a cooperative political strategy. It works with states, businesses, NGOs, local communities, and indigenous groups – sometimes all at once. Even as this goal-oriented approach has made TNC highly effective in protecting ecosystems, it has made it somewhat less effective in changing the underlying political and economic conditions that cause environmental degradation in the first place.

This case study makes clear that no single theoretical approach offers a satisfactory analysis of how TNC fits in the history of world politics. Transformationalists struggle to explain TNC's strong ties to states and market actors, particularly in light of its internal paradigmatic struggle over core values. TNC also confounds the expectations of critical theorists, not because it lacks some of the problematic characteristics they anticipate but because its ecological focus positions it outside the human-centered scope of the critical theoretical lens. Pragmatists offer the clearest insight to TNC and the role it plays in world political history, yet the pragmatic tendency to reduce all behavior to a function of influence leaves them ill-equipped to account for much of TNC's ecological work.

This case study underscores the need for additional theoretical reduction. Thus far, theoretical efforts to account for the role GCS plays in the history of global water governance have featured either its ontological, political *or* axiological characteristics. Consequently, when analyzed in its entirety, the literature on GCS is fraught with tension. Yet, from this conversation it is possible to extract a set of fundamental or core functions of GCS. That is, that GCS performs certain essential functions and that these basic functions can be revealed by examining its ontological, political, *and* axiological characteristics. By thus joining our analysis of GCS regarding these basic functions, it is possible to empirically analyze its behavior so that we can return to our ordinary theoretical discourse with improved structure and understanding. Although it would be unwise to use this one study as the basis for theoretical reform, this case does argue for additional empirical research into this important yet clearly misunderstood global political phenomenon.

Chapter Five: The Council of Canadians

People are like water and the ruler a boat. Water can support a boat or overturn it
William Shakespeare

Under the guidance of its National Chairperson, Maude Barlow, the Council of Canadians (COC) has become a leader in the global effort to redefine water as a public trust and human right. This chapter examines how and why the COC came to play such a prominent role in the debate over global water governance in order to adjudicate competing theoretical claims about the role GCS plays in the world political system. This study of the COC is instrumental in advancing this broader objective because it represents that faction of water-related GCS actors that rank the satisfaction of human needs for water over the satisfaction of environmental and economic imperatives. As such, the COC serves as the proxy for a key subset of actors that make up GCS in the realm of global water governance. Its perceptions, values, and behaviors can therefore provide important insights to the strengths and limitations of competing theoretical expectations about the ontological, political, and axiological characteristics of GCS.

This chapter begins with a historical account devoted to the origins of the COC and its organizational evolution. The focus then turns to a brief description of its organizational structure and the genesis of its interest in water resource issues. This background information lays the foundation for a detailed analysis of the organization's political ontology, specifically as it relates to water resource problems. This discussion

anchors the following sections, which seek to reveal the COC's values and strategy.

These discussions provide the basis for the detailed analysis that weighs the accuracy of competing theoretical expectations about GCS with the actual perceptions, values and practices of the COC.

Introduction to the COC

Origins

The COC was founded on 11 March 1985 as a response to a conservative realignment of Canadian politics. On 4 September 1984, Brian Mulroney and his Progressive Conservatives scored a decisive victory over Canada's traditionally dominant Liberal party, securing 211 seats in Parliament to the Liberals' 40. Emboldened by this success, on 10 September 1984, just seven days before he officially took office, Mulroney traveled to the Economic Club of New York, where he announced his intention to usher in a new more conciliatory era of relations between the United States and Canada. This meant the Canadian government would turn away from its protectionist traditions and adopt a supply-side economic philosophy featuring free markets and free trade. To jump-start this effort, Mulroney also announced his support for the liberalization of Canada's foreign investment policies, particularly those related to the energy sector. Furthermore, Mulroney articulated his commitment to growing Canada's national investments in the areas of mutual defense and security (Mulroney 1984). To demonstrate the depth of his commitment to setting what was once a rather contentious relationship on a more friendly and cooperative foundation, Mulroney suggested that the two national leaders hold yearly meetings to address areas of mutual concern. Then-US President Ronald Reagan agreed and the two leaders scheduled their first meeting for March 1985.

In politics, as in physics, to every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. In Canada, the reaction to this sudden conservative realignment of its national politics was immediately manifested in the equally sudden proliferation of progressive non-governmental organizations (NGO). Foremost of these was the Council of Canadians (COC). The COC set out to secure the economic and cultural sovereignty of Canada against the threat posed by Mulroney Conservatives and their free-market agenda. For COC members, conservative free-market reforms constituted an existential threat to the Canadian way of life. The COC interpreted Mulroney's free-market initiatives as a "total restructuring of the national economy to suit the free-market philosophy of the United States" (M. Barlow 1991, xxiii). Within this context, they described the Mulroney government as a "selfish, grasping, and greedy plutocracy abandoning the work of generations of Canadians, and the dreams of the vast majority of the people who live in this country, for American standards and values and priorities" (Hurtig 2002, xiii).

COC members generally understood "the work of generations" to mean the cultivation of a particular national ethic that values "sharing for survival", in contrast to the American ethic of "survival of the fittest" (M. Barlow 2007, 347). They saw this traditional Canadian ethic manifest in the Medical Care Insurance Act, which established universal access to health care, as well as in Canada's National Energy Board and its Foreign Investment Review Agency, both of which were set up to promote Canadian ownership of Canadian industry. For the COC, Canada's conservative realignment signified a radical departure from this traditional ethic. In place of the strong social welfare state, conservatives favored the neoliberal policies of the Reagan administration. In the US, these policies produced a privatized health insurance system, Reagan's purge

of Social Security disability rolls (Pear 1992), and dramatic increases in net capital inflows to the private sector. It is against this background that the COC came to see itself as the voice of the silent Canadian majority that wants an egalitarian and just model of public policy. For COC members, giving voice to this majority meant opposing the Conservative effort to liberalize Canada's economy.

The first meeting between Mulroney and Reagan provided the COC a prime opportunity to act on its beliefs. Dubbed the "Shamrock Summit" in reference to the leaders' common Irish lineage, this meeting cemented the cooperative tone of the relationship (Bromke and Nossal 1987). In preparation for the Summit, each side took steps to highlight the new spirit of goodwill. For Reagan's part, he issued a new National Security Directive to assess US-Canada relations. This review later led to Reagan's acknowledgement that the U.S. bears some responsibility for the acid rain that degraded the soil and water quality in eastern Canada. In the months leading up to the Summit, Mulroney took much larger steps to demonstrate his intent to set US-Canada relations on a more amicable footing. For example, he stripped the National Energy Board of its powers, re-tasked the Foreign Investment Review Agency with the responsibility to promote foreign investments, and announced a \$300 million program to eliminate domestic sources of acid rain (Bromke and Nossal 1987). Two headlines in the *New York Times* effectively captured the lopsided approach to the Summit: "No economic quarrels face Reagan in Canada" (Douglas 1985) and "Reagan, in Quebec, agrees to *study* acid rain issue" (Weinraub 1985. Emphasis added). The Summit produced a fishing treaty on the West Coast, a commitment for more than \$700 million by Canada to modernize the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), and declarations by both

parties supporting greater bilateral trade flows and tariff reductions. But in the end, Reagan had denied Mulroney the one thing he wanted most: a promise of action to address the US sources of acid rain.

The “Shamrock Summit” and its skewed outcome galvanized the COC. In his history of Canadian protest activity, Jeffrey M. Ayres (1997, 111) argues that the COC quickly developed into “the most thoroughly focused [Canadian] organization devoted specifically to opposing a bilateral free trade agreement between Canada and the U.S.” Their objections flowed from an overarching concern with the potential loss of Canadian sovereignty. Among other things, they feared that these bilateral agreements would result in the loss of Canadian control over sovereign energy supplies, natural resources, and national defense (Hurtig 2002). Ayers recounts how the COC worked to establish a broad national network of social groups committed to opposing a free-trade deal. At its height, this ad-hoc, anti-free trade coalition consisted of twenty national organizations and associated coalitions, with linkages that stretched into nearly every province and territory (Ayers 1997).

Through its practices as an activist network organizer, the COC came to play a prominent role in the long series of national free-trade opposition efforts that animated Canadian politics throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s. The “Maple Leaf Summit” was the first and most noteworthy of these efforts. Held in April 1987, the “Maple Leaf Summit” was the anti-free trade coalition’s response to the 1985 “Shamrock Summit.” Scheduled to coincide with the Reagan-Mulroney meeting in Ottawa, the “Maple Leaf Summit” united hundreds of activists around a range of anti-free trade demonstrations. While the Summit itself held symbolic importance, it was most noteworthy for what it

produced. That is, it birthed the Pro-Canada Network (later renamed the Action Canada Network), which unified the diverse elements of the anti-free trade movement within a single national organization, thereby making it possible to overcome a long history of social advocacy fragmentation (Ayers 1997). Through its organizing capacity, the COC played an instrumental role in this important development and, over time, it continued to perform a key function in steering the activities of the Pro-Canada Network and its anti-free trade coalition members.

As was the case with The Nature Conservancy, the story of the COC and its origins contribute important insights into its fundamental nature. For instance, it is already evident that the COC grounds its organizational identity on the construction of an “other.” Initially, the Mulroney administration and its free-trade policies provided the foil against which the COC could structure its identity. To be clear, this is not to suggest that the COC was devoid of any positive conception of identity. On the contrary, the organization projected a positive vision of its role as the steward of a uniquely Canadian ethic; however, the need for such a steward only made sense within the context of some looming threat. Therefore, the ultimate conclusion of its struggle against the free-trade agenda thrust the organization into a kind of identity crisis. Its answer to this crisis was not to reformulate its core values but rather to set its identity on a more positive footing by establishing itself as a global voice of the effort to secure the universal values of human rights and social justice. This move led to a more cosmopolitan conception of imagined community, of which it is but one member of a broader global community based on shared conceptions of morality and justice.

Organizational Structure

Like many of the other organizations that make up GCS, the COC started out as a local effort led by a small group of prominent local citizens to address a local problem. These early members included fiction writer Margaret Atwood, economic nationalist Mel Hurtig, Canadian historian Pierre Berton, and feminist activist Maude Barlow.

For all organizations, growth induces change and the COC was no exception. Today it is Canada's largest citizen organization. This growth has resulted in significant organizational adjustments (see Figure 4). No longer just a small collection of prominent citizens, the COC is now a highly and hierarchically organized member-based organization. Through memberships and other contributions, the COC generated \$5.1 million in 2008 (COC 2009a). Its primary decision-making body is the Board of Directors, which consists of 19 members appointed to staggered two year terms. Half of these positions are directly accountable to the general membership, which elects Board members during the Annual General Meeting. Four Board members are directly elected by the chapters within each region and confirmed by the Annual General Meeting, and are therefore accountable to the regional chapters that elect them. In addition, the national chairperson also serves on the Board. The chairperson is elected during the Annual General Meeting by the membership and serves a one-year voluntary term. This position is responsible for chairing Board meetings, acting as the organization's spokesperson, and providing day-to-day oversight of executive functions on behalf of the Board.

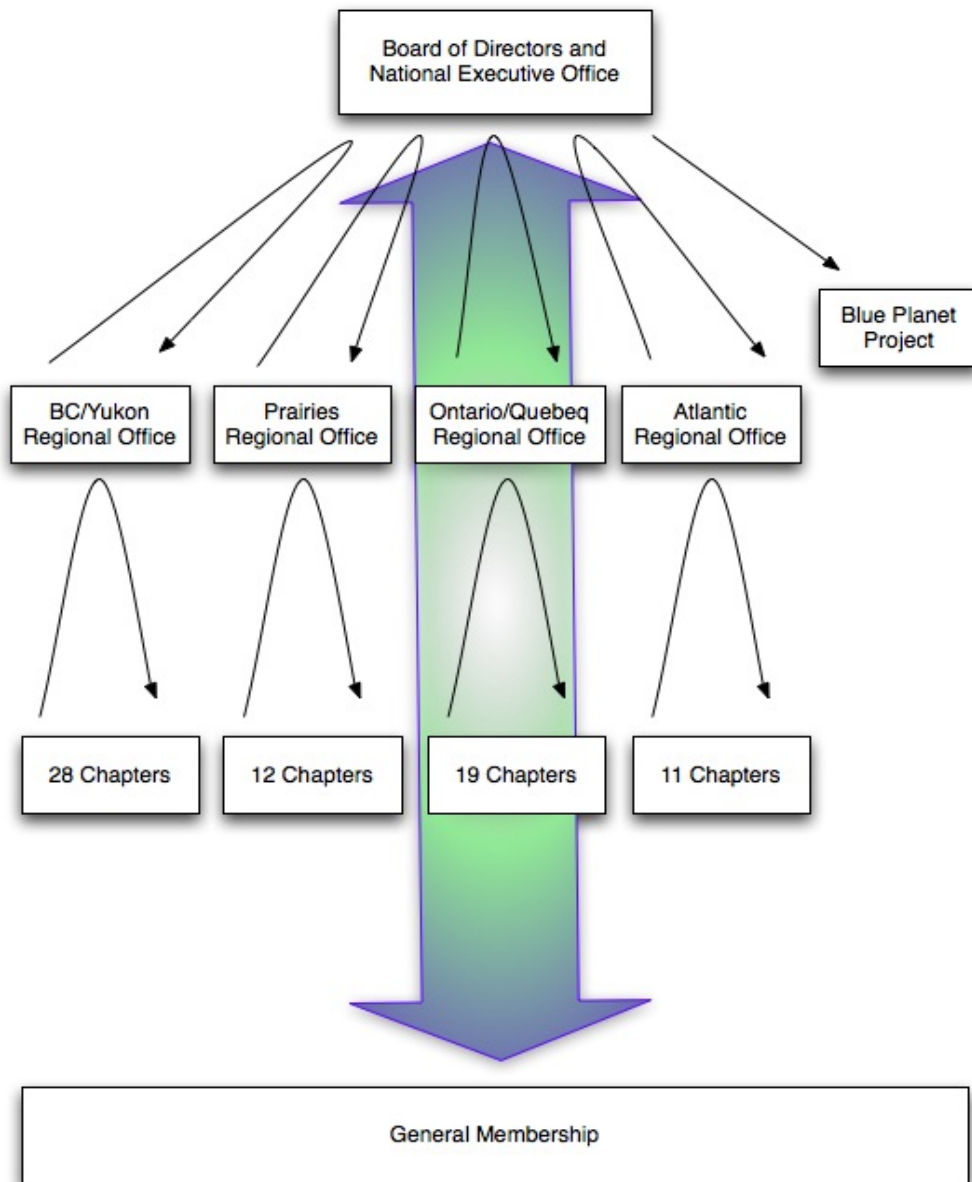
The COC's executive body is its National Executive Office. At its head is the Executive Director, who functions as a CEO: this person is charged with overseeing the organization's efforts to implement the principles and objectives agreed to by the Board.

The Executive Director is selected by the Board of Directors and is therefore directly accountable to that body. Also housed within the National Executive Office are the offices of Organizing, Development, Campaigns and Communication, Finance, and Human Resources and Administration. These offices coordinate the COC's national efforts to advance its organizational interests, which they describe as campaigns. The COC has seven of these campaigns: deep integration, health care, trade, water, energy, food, and peace. In addition to these campaigns, the COC also sponsors the Blue Planet Project. Created by the COC, this Project focuses specifically on the global dimensions of water resource problems, specifically those that relate to issues of trade and privatization. The Blue Planet Project is an organizational oddity for the COC. Although the Board of Directors oversees its operations, it is the only "campaign" with a dedicated staff. Additionally, it relies on foundations and major donors for financial support, as opposed to the COC's membership base.

The COC ultimately relies on its national network of chapters to support and advance its organizational priorities. It contains 70 chapters in all, which are divided into four geographic regions. Regional offices house a small salaried staff, which are hired by and directly responsible to the Executive Director. Funding decisions regarding the regional offices and the chapters are made by the Board of Directors and the National Executive Office. Beyond their role in selecting the regional Board representatives, the chapters do not have any voting rights nor do they have the authority to recall elected Board members. Chapters hold regular membership meetings, public events and actions, communicate the COCs interests to the media, and acts as government watchdogs (COC 2009a). Each member receives the quarterly publication, *Canadian Perspectives*, as well

as frequent newsletters and other mailings. In addition, the COC maintains an organizational website where members can participate in campaign blogs and find additional information on organization, including archives of its Annual Reports.

Figure 4 : COC's Organizational Structure



Source: <http://www.canadians.org/about/index.html>

Interest in Water Resource Issues

Water resource issues have always been a significant subject of concern for the COC. From the outset, the COC was apprehensive that the Mulroney administration would initiate bulk water exports to the US. Initially, these concerns were founded, at least in part, on a perception of administrative support for the Great Recycling and Northern Development Canal, a massive water diversion scheme that would siphon off a large volume of water from Canada's James Bay for use in the dry regions of Canada and the United States (Kovacs 1996). However, throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, the COC situated its concerns over this and other bulk-water export schemes within the overarching context of its opposition to Mulroney's free-trade agenda (COC 2009b). During this period, the thrust of the COC's water-related efforts focused on an ultimately unsuccessful campaign to remove a provision from the first free-trade agreement between the US and Canada that defined water as a tradable good.

This domestic interest in water resource problems morphed into an issue of global concern in 1994, as part of the COC's turn to global issues. In the mid-1990s, the COC established close ties to the San Francisco based International Forum on Globalization (IFG), an organization that Maude Barlow has since joined as a member of its Board of Directors. Early research on the issue of water by the IFG inspired Barlow to focus greater attention on the problem, prompting her to ask "who own[s] water? And who [gets] to make the decisions about water in a world that is running out of water?" (M. Barlow 2008c). This heightened interest led Barlow to write an IFG report on the issue of water privatization (M. Barlow 1999), which eventually led to her co-authored bestselling book on the global water crisis, *Blue Gold: The Fight to Stop the Corporate Theft of the World's Water* (M. Barlow and Clarke 2002). This and later works (M.

Barlow 2008a; Lohan 2008) thrust Barlow and the COC into the global water spotlight, garnering Barlow several awards, the most noteworthy of which was the “Right Livelihood Award” bestowed by the Swedish Parliament, which she earned in 2005 for her work on the issue of global water justice. Because Barlow has been the COC’s National Chairperson since 1986 and because she has taken a deep personal interest in the water issue, her individual contributions to this campaign have come to define the COC’s position as well. Therefore, much of the information about the COC and its water campaign derives directly from Barlow’s writings and speaking engagements. In the following discussion, this information serves as the basis for illuminating the ontological, political, and axiological characteristics of the COC

Political Ontology

Political ontology describes the way political actors perceive the character, nature, essence and “reality” of what exists in the world political system (Hay 2006, 80). It constitutes an actor’s conception of “*political being*, to what *is* politically, to what *exists politically*, and to the units that comprise political reality” (Hay 2006, 80). Thus, considerations of political ontology provide insight to the mindset of the actors who make up GCS, thereby allowing us to ascertain what GCS is, what it exists in relation to, and how it relates to these other entities, which, in their totality make up and animate world politics.

In response to the question of political being, the COC perceives itself as a pariah, or political outsider. It understands its place as that of a government and corporate watchdog. As such, it constitutes an “imagined community” (Anderson 1991, 6) made up of individuals who share a particular set of preferences, perceptions and values. It is

an “imagined” community because its members will “never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” As I discuss below, part of what makes the COC a political outsider is its principled commitment to advancing social justice and environmental sustainability, among other things.

There is no doubt that these principles play a significant role in binding this community together. However, principles alone do not define a community. Community is about drawing boundaries; it is about identifying who is part of your community and who is not. Principles are not always the basis for drawing these distinctions. For example, differences in fundamental principles do not completely explain the rift between the Hutu and Tutsi, between Shiites and Sunnis, or between Quebecois and all other Canadians. For the COC, the boundaries of its community are not defined so much by the collective endeavor to secure and project shared values; rather, they are primarily defined by a collective exclusion of the “other.” In this respect, it does not matter as much that they are for justice and for sustainability (although these values still play a significant role), but rather that they are against governments and markets. To reinforce this identity, the COC refuses to accept financial contributions from government agencies or corporations. Thus, the COC has not built an organizational identity and imagined community on the basis of advocacy but on the basis of opposition. Everything for the COC hinges on its ability to perpetuate this identity, as it constitutes the basis of its claim to offer a legitimately critical voice on issues of national and international significance (COC 2009b).

These insights provide some clues that will prove useful in answering how the COC

might answer the question, what *is* politically? Put differently, what does the COC view as a legitimate subject of political debate and what, if anything, does it hold is apolitical? In portraying itself as a critical voice and an advocate of global justice, it seems clear that the COC privileges the role of agency over structure. That is, it views the roles of corporations, nations, the world political system, and even capitalism as contested domains. Specifically, it views these entities as social constructs, which implies that they possess instrumental rather than intrinsic value, that they are therefore malleable – although not infinitely so, and that civil society may possess the ability to bring about a positive transformation within these entities– meaning a transformation that reconfigures their behavior to ensure that they serve a legitimate social purpose. What the COC views as apolitical is the fundamental value of water as a human right and public trust. Viewed from the COC’s perspective, these values are not open to debate because they constitute given and eternal truths.

This perception of what *is* politically reveals what *exists* politically and the units that make up its political reality. For the COC, there are fundamentally two types of people in the world: those who see our social and political systems as a means of securing equal treatment and fundamental rights and those who view it instead as a means of advancing their particular interests, even when this pursuit is made at the expense of the common good. To illustrate this point, Maude Barlow frequently cites Martin Luther King, Jr., “It may be true that a law cannot restrain the heart but it can restrain the heartless” (Martin Luther King, Jr. as quoted in Barlow 2008a, 158). For Barlow, as for the COC, the heartless are those who would deny the right of individuals to have reliable access to safe drinking water and sanitation services, regardless of the reason. Thus, when it comes to

water, political reality consists solely of those who acknowledge this right and work to ensure it is guaranteed, on one hand, and those who would deny this right, on the other. The COC aligns itself with the former group, which consists of indigenous peoples, labor and environmental groups, women's groups, and other like-minded associations. Under the auspices of its Blue Planet Project, the COC cultivates relationships with other like-minded NGOs around the world and works with these groups to select strategic sites on which to fight its political battles. For example, the COC worked in concert with a broad range of water-related NGOs to support the passage of a referendum in Uruguay that amended that country's constitution to declare water as a human right. In addition, the COC, working in concert with other NGOs, called on the government in Uruguay to guarantee a public system of water service delivery (COC 2004b). In contrast, the COC perceives itself as being diametrically opposed to the interests of multinational corporations, globe trotting bureaucrats, international governance organizations, and others that value water as a commodity, in which access depends upon the willingness or ability to pay.

Axiology

In addition to Barlow's personal interest in water resource issues, water fits within the COC's core values of sovereignty, social justice, and democracy. Taking on the challenge of global water governance was therefore a logical progression in the COC's organizational development. When combined with the discussion above, this deep and consistent commitment to core values reveals key insights regarding way GCS fits in the history of world politics and is therefore instrumental to the overarching goal of this dissertation, which is to adjudicate competing theoretical claims about GCS. To make

this point more explicit, the discussion now turns to an investigation of the COC's core values and its commitment to these values even in the face of considerable challenges.

Sovereignty

The COC's interest in sovereignty developed within the context of Canadian dependence on the US. From the COC's perspective, the increasing asymmetry of this relationship threatened to bring about the slow destruction of Canadian sovereignty, its standard of living and its quality of life (Hurtig 2002, xi). The COC particularly values the economic and cultural dimensions of sovereignty. Its concern for economic sovereignty finds expression through its promotion of the policies and practices associated with economic nationalism. Economic nationalism is a protectionist economic philosophy that seeks to counter the negative effects of economic globalization by restoring Canadian control over Canadian enterprises. The philosophy calls for a national moratorium on foreign ownership and foreign control of Canadian industry, improved market competition by blocking corporate mergers and takeovers, slowing and in some cases stopping the sale and export of natural resources, and reinvigorating national government as a bulwark against foreign and corporate interests (M. Barlow 1991; Hurtig 2002). Its emphasis on cultural sovereignty calls for the reassertion of a unique Canadian moral presence on the world stage, a presence that gives expression to the shared commitment to human rights, non-violence, and the love of the land. According to Maude Barlow, these values have been as "Canada is being seen more as a satellite of the United States and less as an autonomous nation" (M. Barlow 1991, 199).

The COC has transposed these concerns for economic and cultural sovereignty into the realm of global water governance. Here, its ideas of economic nationalism find

expression through its principled opposition to privatization and the virtual trade in water, which is the water used in the production and trade of agricultural and industrial products (Hoekstra 2003). On these points the COC supports the position articulated by the IFG regarding the concept of “subsidiarity,” which calls for restoring local control over local resources to the greatest extent possible (“A Bias to the Local” 2009). Subsidiarity, they argue, promises to address the withering economic sovereignty of the poor and powerless by relieving them of the debt burdens that often force them to exploit their scarce water resources. Subsidiarity also requires the citizens of wealthy countries to regain control of their multinational corporations by holding them accountable for their activities in foreign countries (M. Barlow 2007, 160).

To give expression to its concerns for cultural sovereignty, the COC argues that water should not be valued as a commodity but as a commons and a public trust (M. Barlow 2008a, 2008b; M. Barlow and Clarke 2002). Making this move grants governments “the right, as well as the responsibility, to intervene in the market when necessary and to institute regulatory measures, including the establishment of public enterprises” (M. Barlow and Clarke 2002, 170). Whereas defining water as a commodity or market good excludes all but a narrow range of utilitarian values, defining water as a commons and public trust takes a more inclusive approach that is able to accommodate the multiplicity of values attached to water, thereby allowing us “to think not only in terms of income per capita but cultural identity, community, harmony between ourselves and with mother earth” (M. Barlow 2007, 176).

Social Justice

From the outset, the COC’s concern for social justice underpinned its entire philosophy.

Its original concerns about the Americanization of Canada were born out of its anxieties over the erosion of linguistic and regional equality within Canada, the growing domestic disparity between the haves and have nots, and the gradual dismantling of critical social safety nets, including medicare, publicly financed higher education, and welfare programs (Hurtig 2002). Attributing these social injustices to the rise of free-trade and free-market agendas, the COC initially set out to expose and oppose these forces through its promotion of economic and cultural sovereignty. With its global turn in 1994, the COC transposed these values of social justice from the national to the global sphere.

Water played a crucial role in this transition. The COC's concern for water allowed it to inject its values of social justice into an expanding sphere of global concerns about the consolidation of corporate power, resulting in a more ideologically consistent and thereby strategically focused global opposition. But ultimately what gave the COC traction outside its domestic sphere of influence was the articulation of a social justice approach to water as a human right.

One lesson the COC learned in the course of its battles over free trade is that language matters. Although its efforts to make the debates over free trade about economic and cultural sovereignty failed to stop NAFTA, the COC nonetheless persisted in viewing language and ideas as powerful weapons in the struggle for social justice. Armed with the notion of human rights, the COC developed into a small yet powerful force in the global contest over who would govern global water resources and to what ends. In a recent talk on the global water crisis, Maude Barlow effectively captured the essence of the organization's approach to social justice and global water governance:

If we say collectively that there is a vacuum in our laws around water protection and around commons protection, not just water, and step into

that breach and we take a stand, who's to stop us? Who's to say that we don't have the right to claim that that local watershed belongs to the watershed, belongs to the people who are dependent on it and belongs to the generations that come ahead? (M. Barlow 2008c 27:27)

This means that the right language can empower people - it can empower them to act and it can empower them to succeed against what are seemingly overwhelming odds. The particular power of the human rights language, Barlow argues, is that it gives people a set of tools that they can then use within their territorial boundaries to challenge multinational corporations and their proxies within large multilateral institutions like the World Bank and the World Water Council.

Democracy

Related to this value of social justice is the COC's commitment to democracy. In many of its arguments against the Mulroney administration, for example, the COC used the issue of democracy as a rallying cry against what it framed as an elitist and anti-democratic free-trade agenda. According to Maude Barlow, the Mulroney administration had modeled itself after an American system that "lost its central goal, that the dream must be for everyone" (M. Barlow 1991, 179). Democracy is vital, she continues, because it is only through this system "that *people* determine standards of living, access to the resources and wealth of a country, and the conditions under which business will be conducted" (M. Barlow 1991, 181). Thus, to surrender democracy "to economic forces is to define Canada only in terms of the bottom line, the corporate vision" (M. Barlow 1991, 181).

Throughout the COC's struggle against free trade, it fused this passion for democracy with its equally passionate commitment to national sovereignty. This meant the COC perceived government as a potential solution to the threat posed by the rising

influence of an anti-democratic corporate elite. When Jean Chrétien and his Liberal party returned to power in 1993, it seemed for a moment that the COC would finally gain the government ally it so desperately desired. The Liberals' success was at least partly attributed to Chrétien's campaign pledge to renegotiate key provisions of NAFTA before the agreement took effect on January 1, 1994. Nevertheless, when the time came, Chrétien and his Liberals allowed NAFTA to take effect without a single modification. Maude Barlow and the COC were furious. Writing about the incident several years later, Barlow said, "Chrétien's Liberals fought Brian Mulroney's Progressive Conservatives and their pro-American policies for the entire time they were in opposition and adopted every single plank of the Mulroney agenda when they took office, including NAFTA" (M. Barlow 2005, 15). Characterizing this move as a betrayal (COC 2009c), the COC abandoned its commitment to advancing democracy through the institutional mechanism of national sovereignty, grounding it instead in the social apparatus of popular sovereignty. Consequently, the COC came to view government as part of the problem, not the potential solution (COC 2009c).

Having adopted the identity of a government and corporate watchdog (COC 2009b), the COC then extended its populist conception of democracy to the problem of global water governance. The COC now argues that nation-states often fail to live up to their responsibilities when they cede control of their water resources to the "Lords of Water," a constellation of pro-market actors that includes the World Water Council, private water operators like Vivendi International, Suez Environment, and Thames Water, the water industry lobbying group AquaFed, as well as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization. The COC's solution is

to redefine water as part of the global commons, yet ensure that it is ultimately subject to local and democratic management (M. Barlow 2007, 162). The COC defines a democratic water management system as one that uses local solutions to solve local problems. Specifically, it argues that democratic solutions should display “a commitment to efficiency, accountability, transparency, and community participation” (M. Barlow 2007, 162). For the COC, the challenge of global water governance has become more than simply solving the particular issues surrounding water; it has instead become a conduit for bringing about a democratic, political transformation in our local, national and global political and natural systems. In the words of Maude Barlow, water is “nature’s gift to teach us to live in harmony with the earth” and, by extension, with one another (M. Barlow 2008c 42:26).

Political Characteristics

Because the COC perceives itself as a watchdog struggling against the injustices and anti-democratic tendencies of a corporate and bureaucratic elite, it has tended to adopt the strategies of a political outsider.³ In this David and Goliath struggle, the COC has adopted many of the typical strategies of an organization in its position: naming and shaming, public mobilization, and litigation, to mention but a few (Sikkink 2005). However, with the 2008 appointment of Maude Barlow to the newly created position of Senior Advisor on Water to the President of the United Nations, the COC had an opportunity, albeit brief, to also play the role of a political insider.

Outsider Strategies

Throughout most of its history, the principal means through which the COC has sought to

³ (For more on the "insider-outsider" distinction see Galtung 2000; Gulbrandsen and Andresen 2004).

advance its political objectives was by standing outside the existing political structure and casting blame (Martin 1990). As a means of achieving its objective of enshrining the human right to water in national and international law, it is too soon to say for certain if this approach is a success. Yet, as both a means of getting this issue on the international agenda and elevating its own organizational status in the process, there is little doubt that this political strategy has achieved its desired objectives. In his strategic analysis of rights-based organizations like the COC, the executive director of Human Rights Watch, Kenneth Roth (2004), argues that this “naming and shaming” strategy is most effective when an organization delivers a message that clearly identifies the violation, the violator, and the remedy. Because the function of a naming and shaming strategy is to generate public outrage *and* direct this outrage toward a particular set of actors and practices, Roth argues that this strategy works best when it frames the problem as one of arbitrary or discriminatory misconduct rather than as a more abstract matter of distributive justice.

This explanation proves quite helpful in explaining the COC’s limited success, both domestically and internationally. Domestically, the COC has labeled Canada’s conservative Harper administration as obstructionist for its role in blocking the United Nations Human Rights Council from recognizing water as a human right, associating the administration with that dominant subset of the international community that has “failed to adequately manage and provide water for all” (COC 2004a). On the international stage, the COC has focused its attention on the “Lords of Water,” arguing that this unelected collection of corporations, bureaucrats, and international institutions “have taken for themselves the role of speaking for the world. They are pushing one development model, a model through which all water is privatized and the market

determines allocation” (M. Barlow 2009). What these behaviors reveal, the COC argues, is that governments are “abdicating the real decision-making about the future of the world’s depleting water supplies to a group of private interests and transnational corporations that view the [global water] crisis as an opportunity to make money and gain power” (M. Barlow 2008a, 33). The answer they put forward is to enshrine the human right to water in national and international law, “to settle once and for all the question of who controls water” (M. Barlow 2008a, 164). This endeavor to institutionalize the human right to water recently took a giant leap forward when, on July 26, 2010, the United Nations General Assembly declared “the right to safe and clean drinking water as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights” (as quoted in Gleick 2010). For Barlow, this declaration is a “moral statement, a guiding principle of the countries of the world . . . that they have taken a step in a direction of saying that water is a human right and a public trust and that no one should be dying for lack of water” (Democracy Now 2010, 59:05). This suggests that the next step for Barlow and other likeminded human rights advocates is to turn their focus from the institutionalization of a human right to water at the international level to a state-by-state effort focused on institutionalizing this right at the national level. The clear reference to a “moral statement” also suggests not just what Barlow and others intend to do but also how they intend to do it, which is to use the UN declaration as a means of shaming states into adopting the human right to water as a fundamental principle of their national laws.

In addition to this naming and shaming strategy, the COC also employs the use of litigation and public mobilization to achieve its objectives. Working in concert with the Tay River Legal Defense Fund and the Canadian Environmental Law Association, the

COC supported litigation that forced OMYA Inc., a Swiss-based mining company, to reduce its water takings on the Tay River by two-thirds (Ehrhardt 2004). The COC has also joined with Friends of the Earth, the Polaris Institute, and other water-related NGOs to file a complaint under the Canadian Code of Advertising Standards against Nestle Waters North America, arguing that its advertising campaign attempts to mislead the public on the true impacts of bottled water (Goldberg, Karunanathan, Wilkins, Clarke, and Olivastri 2008). To mobilize public support for its water efforts, the COC hosts international water conferences and organizes marches, rallies, and water resource workshops. Additionally, during her tenure as the national chairperson, Barlow has written several books on the topic of global water governance and traveled extensively to support her books and the COC's agenda. Organizational leaders in the COC also regularly attend international conferences, most notably the World Water Forum and the World Social Forum, where their efforts have focused on attracting the media spotlight.

Insider Strategies

While the COC has frequently utilized lobbying and other insider strategies to advance its domestic objectives, it is only in recent years that it began to adopt insider strategies to advance its global agenda. This development first emerged in 2007, when Maude Barlow accepted a position as the Water Advisor to the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights. This led to her appointment as the Senior Advisor on Water Issues to the President of the United Nations General Assembly the following year. Although the COC used these appointments as tokens of its success, Barlow used it as a means of changing the UN's goals and decision-making procedures surrounding water resource issues by using her position to argue for enshrining the human right to water in national

and international law. She also used these positions to challenge the “Lords of Water.” Speaking on behalf of the U.N. President of the General Assembly, Barlow delivered a rebuke to the World Water Forum for its bias towards private water companies, its failure to structure more inclusive and participatory deliberations, and for its explicit opposition to enshrining the human right to water in international law (Brockmann 2009). Although it is difficult to know for certain if this speech had a direct effect, sponsors of the World Water Forum have thus far endeavored to show that they are placing a greater emphasis “on consultations with stakeholders at the (sub) regional level so as to ensure that *sound proposals* for solutions to the world water crisis are put forward in Marsaille in 2012” (WWC 2009. Emphasis added). As her appointment has since expired, what is unknown is the degree to which the COC will continue to pursue these kinds of insider strategies on the international stage.

Congruence Analysis

The viability of a world political system made up of unitary states rests on the ability of that system to effectively solve such fundamental political problems as the provision and allocation of freshwater resources. One consistent message coming out of the COC is that states have failed to live up to this basic responsibility. As Maude Barlow points out, “well meaning governments have built the foundations of a system that is turning on the very people it was meant to serve” (M. Barlow 1999, 50). She argues that freshwater resource issues have been a low priority for most governments and that the recent trend toward privatization only results in public subsidies for corporations whose involvement has only deepened the global water crisis (M. Barlow 1999).

Assuming she is right, what then are scholars to make of the role those

organizations like the COC play in righting this wrong? Does the rising status of groups like the COC signify the onset of a new era in world water politics, one in which states and markets are increasingly made to compete for dominance with an expanding sphere of GCS? Alternatively, if we assume the old state-centric theories of world politics can accommodate this globalization of civil society, how then are we to make sense of this development? Is this a strategic reaction to new openings in the political opportunity structure? Or, by situating this globalized civil society within the political economy, should we view it less as a means of challenging the dominant ideology than as a means of obliterating the heterogeneity of cultural norms and values that currently animates world politics?

Transformationalist Framework

Transformationalists define the goal of GCS as “one of reclaiming and advancing, at the global level, the social and political space for human freedom” (R. Taylor and Naidoo 2004, 184). This means that the project of GCS is all about extending and deepening a cosmopolitan sense of imagined community, which, in the absence of the commensurate regulatory capacity of a global state, is necessary to provide the means for society to protect itself from the depredations of the self-regulating market (Lipschutz 2007). To advance this project, however, transformationalists insist that GCS must preserve the plural and autonomous representation of its constituents’ interests (Carr and Norman 2008). Typically, this is understood to mean that the entities that make up GCS voluntarily commit to the universalistic norms, values, principles and practices associated with political and economic liberalism (Lipschutz 2006a). However, some transformationalists also concede that GCS contains groups that are conservative,

reactionary or even nihilistically violent (Lipschutz 2007). What these and other groups share in common, they argue, is an autonomy of interests. That is, they are self-organizing, voluntary associations that are distinct from states and other institutions of governance, on the one hand, and markets, on the other (Kaldor 2003b).

If the autonomy of interests is the key to understanding GCS, then the transformationalist approach appears to provide a satisfactory explanation of the COC's role in world politics. Although a member-based organization, the COC does not accept contributions from corporations or government agencies. This helps to explain how the COC has been able to preserve its independence from the agendas of states and international governance organizations. Furthermore, because COC members and regional offices directly elect members to the board of directors, the organization's agenda continues to reflect its constituents' concerns. Whether it was mobilizing public sentiment against a proposed water privatization scheme, building global alliances with other like-minded organizations, or staging protests during the World Water Forum, time and again the COC has demonstrated its autonomy and its commitment to creating and advancing the social and political space for human freedom. Given its autonomy and the depth of its commitment to guaranteeing the human right to water, we might therefore conclude that a transformationalist approach provides the best insight to the role this organization plays in the history of world politics.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to imagine how the COC's human rights approach to the global water crisis constitutes a fundamental transformation of the world political system, particularly given the COC's equally strong preference for securing this right through national and international laws. In other words, the COC does little to move our

imagination of world politics beyond a traditional Westphalian framework. On the contrary, its efforts work to reinforce and prop up this framework, which it perceives as a bulwark against the real and potential dangers of unregulated market actors. Rather than transforming world politics, the COC acts instead to preserve the status quo against the impending threat of replacing collective or social property rights with a more liberal conception of individual market-based rights to freshwater resources.

Pragmatic Framework

Pragmatists would argue that civil society groups are never truly autonomous but are instead always embedded within a larger sphere of political struggle and contestation, where “the politics of transnational civil society is centrally about the way in which certain groups emerge and are legitimized (by governments, institutions, and other groups)” (Hurrell and Woods 1995, 468 as cited in Keck and Sikkink 1998a). This means that the significance of GCS has less to do with ability of groups to formulate interests in isolation from the overwhelming influence of states and markets than with the complex and strategic interactions that translate certain ideas and norms into political and economic action. Pragmatists advise us to think of GCS as a vast marketplace of ideas, where, like any marketplace, what determines the value of an idea is the success one has in selling it. By extension, pragmatists view GCS first and foremost as a factory of strategic innovation and diffusion, the goal of which is to gain influence within the world political system.

Thus, a pragmatist would argue that the COC’s fit in world politics is principally determined by its strategic exploitation of key opportunities in the global political structure. Its success in selling or popularizing its ideas might therefore be attributed to a

host of strategic choices. For instance, the strategic choice to frame water resources as human rights did not develop in isolation but is instead consistent with an established liberal tradition that privileges the needs of individuals above those of collectivities. Writing within this liberal tradition, John Rawls (1999, 79-80) argued that human rights “specify limits to a regime’s internal autonomy” in that “their fulfillment is a necessary condition of the decency of a society’s political institutions and of its legal order.” The COC’s decision to frame the water debate within this human rights tradition therefore speaks less to its autonomy of interests than to its strategic skill. Furthermore, by clearly identifying the violation, the violator, and the remedy, the COC framed this issue in such a way as to maximize its potential success in securing the human right to water as the dominant international norm of global water governance.

Other strategic choices, none of which are particularly innovative, also increased the popularity of the organization and its position. For instance, Maude Barlow’s decision to accept an appointment within the U.N. increased the profile and legitimacy of its campaign for enshrining the human right to water in national and international law. By writing and publicizing books on the right to water, Barlow has attracted even greater media attention to the cause. The COC has also actively participated in the creation and proliferation of transnational advocacy networks, which aim to make the “demands, claims, or rights of the less powerful win out over the purported interests of the more powerful” (Keck and Sikkink 1998a, 217).

Ultimately, however, pragmatic expectations are incongruent to the behavior of the COC. Its principal flaw rests in the failure of pragmatists to grant sufficient weight to the role that values play in directing the behavior of the COC. In short, pragmatists portray

the strategic behavior of GCS as a function of shifts in the political opportunity structure. A pragmatist might therefore explain the COC's decision to go global as a function of new strategic political opportunities to gain domestic influence by operating in the international and transnational spheres (Keck and Sikkink 1998a; Sikkink 2005). This would certainly explain the COC's efforts to develop transnational advocacy coalitions and Maude Barlow's decision to accept a position in the UN. However, pragmatists cannot account for the level of persistence in the COC's opposition to free trade and free market policies. Nor can pragmatists explain the COC's refusal to accept contributions from states or corporations. Rather, following the passage of NAFTA, pragmatic theory would lead us to expect the COC to abandon its core values and adopt different values that are better suited to enhancing its influence within this new neo-liberal political climate. Similarly, pragmatists would expect the COC to behave far more opportunistically in its fund raising activities. That the COC remained committed to its core values constitutes a major flaw in the pragmatist framework.

Critical Framework

In the end, critical theories offer the most satisfactory account of the role the COC plays in the history of global water governance. Critical theorists find fault with transformationalist and pragmatic conceptions of the world political system, which, they argue, embrace both the state system and liberal democracy as given, thereby foreclosing the possibility of ushering in a post-Westphalian world and/or rejecting the liberal capitalist order (Pasha and Blaney 1998). Critical theorists blame transformationalists for casting the international disorder of systemic anarchy in a negative light, as "that which must be tamed and transcended via the growing modernization of the global relations,"

which includes GCS (Blaney and Inayatullah 2010, 15). Pragmatists are taken to task for their failure to explicitly ask “on what - and whose - terms is the cosmopolitanism of transnational advocacy networks being constructed?” (Scholte 1999, 394). The alternative and preferable method, critical theorists argue, is to situate GCS within the political economy. This move reveals the relationship between GCS and the oligarchic organization of contemporary global political economy, thereby making it possible to determine the extent to which GCS represents an alternative to the hegemonic ordering of global social space (Pasha and Blaney 1998).

Such a critical approach would likely find much to celebrate in the COC’s ontological perceptions, values and strategic behavior. The COC’s refusal to accept donations from corporations or government agencies clearly makes it more resilient to attempts by these entities to co-opt the COC for their own purposes. In its rhetoric and practice, the COC also demonstrates a deep appreciation for the diversity of cultural norms and values. This is exemplified through its consistent efforts to guarantee the right of safe and reliable access to freshwater resources for indigenous and marginalized groups.

At first glance, these values and behaviors might lead us to identify the COC as a positive force of diversity and human emancipation within the history of world politics. The strongest evidence for such a conclusion rests in the COC’s outspoken opposition to water privatization. The COC contends that the logic of privatization rests on the flawed assumptions that costly technological solutions constitute our only hope for solving the global water crisis. Water commodification and privatization become necessary to raise the capital needed to sustain these investments. According to the COC, this argument

rests on a false dilemma. It overlooks low cost alternatives like conservation because such “strategies would undermine the massive investments now going into corporate technological and infrastructure solutions” (M. Barlow 2008b). According to Barlow, “the only people who don’t know that this model of globalization is over and done with are the people heading our countries and the big business community telling them what to do, and its time they listen” (Thomsen 2010). The preferable solution then is to guarantee the right to water for all by enshrining water as a human right in national and international law.

Critics would, however, likely take issue with the COC’s insistence on a state-based alternative. On one hand, the COC’s approach would intensify external pressure on the state by enshrining the human right to water in international law. Through this modification of the norms of international society, states could be more easily subject to the shaming strategies of NGOs and others. On the other hand, the implementation of a human rights regime at the national level tends to elevate the role of the judicial system over that of the executive and legislative, and the judicial system is the least democratic branch of government. Because the COC frames water both as a human right and a public trust, the multiplication of legitimate users generated through the adoption of a human rights regime would inevitably lead to conflicts over the just appropriation of finite water resources (Getzler 2004). As such conflicts tend to erupt over competing interpretations of legislative statutes, they tend to fall under the purview of the courts.

Because the COC fuses the human right to water with the public trust doctrine, the philosophical grounds for judicial decision-making would likely continue to rest on the utilitarian principle of beneficial use, in which case water allocation decisions would

continue to privilege those uses with the highest economic returns (Ryan 2001). This concept of a public trust, which has its origins in ancient Rome, has typically been applied in the modern context to protect rights of access for commercial interests. As a trust, this instrument couches the governance of natural resources in terms of property, not stewardship, by designating the state as “trustee” charged with the responsibility for oversight. However, the concept of a public trust does not specify the normative goals that steer public ownership. Consequently, efforts to implement the public trust doctrine in international law would likely result in non-self executing legislation. In other words, because the public trust doctrine offers no guidance to the problem of moral considerability it could not become enacted as domestic or national law without additional implementing legislation (Ryan 2001).

Modifying the public trust through the addition of a human right is intended to address this problem. The purpose is to ensure that states first satisfy the water rights of individuals prior to satisfying other demands on water resources. However, the satisfaction of human needs for water is not a simple matter. Humans need water for cooking, drinking, cleaning and basic sanitation. However, they also need the freshwater embedded in the foods they eat and the sundry other goods they consume, including electricity and environmental services. As legislative bodies are typically not well suited to adjudicating these types of claims, debates over competing interpretations of the law are often thrust into the courts. Because the courts tend to define matters of public trust in terms of property rather than stewardship, and because courts are also predisposed to privileging a utilitarian interpretation of the public trust doctrine (Ryan 2001), it is likely that this fusion of the human rights position to the public trust doctrine would likely

result in government policies that continue to privilege those sectors of society with higher economic returns.

Because critical theorists pay particular attention to the historical and material contexts of political dynamics in the world politics, of the three theoretical frameworks theirs is best suited to identifying these potentially harmful outcomes, particularly as these relate to the prospects for preserving the diversity of cultural norms and values in the world political system. However, beyond its overarching interest in the preservation of diverse values and cultural understandings, critical theory fails to offer a coherent set of criteria upon which decisionmakers ought to distinguish legitimate resource claims from those which are illegitimate. It is often difficult to know for certain which acts are most likely to generate not just political freedom but human freedom. To say that more actors should actively participate in the decisionmaking process is a laudable goal, but there is little assurance that expanding the size of the decisionmaking body will yield a more effective or just outcome.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to adjudicate the theoretical debate over how GCS fits in the history of world politics by assessing the congruence of these theoretical expectations about GCS with the actual values, behavior, and perceptions of the Council of Canadians and its campaign to enshrine in national and international law the definition of water as a public trust and a human right. The COC was selected for this study because it represents that segment of GCS that ranks the satisfaction of human needs for water above other concerns for ecological integrity and economic growth. As a proxy for this subset of transnational non-governmental actors, the COC represents a key faction of the much

larger and more diverse constellation of transnational civil society actors who are actively engaged in the debate over global water governance.

Two conclusions emerge from this analysis. First, no one set of theoretical expectations satisfactorily maps the axiological, political, and ontological characteristics of the COC. Transformationalists' expectation that GCS functions as a contentious third sphere of world politics does appear to correlate with the COC's perceptions, values and strategic behavior. However, in linking the integrity of this independent political sphere to the autonomous development of interests, the transformationalist ontology becomes harder to sustain. As pragmatists are quick to point out, interests do not develop in a vacuum but are instead the products of an intensely competitive strategic effort to gain influence on the world political stage (Betsill and Corell 2008; Friedman, et al. 2005). While this pragmatic explanation offers important insights to how and why the COC increased its status on the world stage, in discounting the role that values play in this story this approach is unable to explain why the COC remained committed to its core values even in the face of seemingly overwhelming adversity.

Because both transformationalists and pragmatists take the role of states and capital as given, critical approaches that situate GCS in the political economy are best suited to explaining how the COC might contribute to or militate against the creation of a more diverse and emancipatory world political system. In other words, in this instance the critical perspective offers the most satisfactory explanation of the ontological, axiological and political characteristics of GCS. Although this critical lens offers important insights to the potentially harmful implications of the COC's human rights approach, it proves less useful for understanding how the COC ought to move forward to satisfactorily solve

the global water crisis. On this point, pragmatists offer a far more satisfactory understanding of the COC's behavior and achievements.

A second and related conclusion is that these findings suggest the need for additional theoretical reductions to improve the explanatory force of existing theoretical models. These theoretical shortcomings reveal a fundamental failure to sufficiently explain the changes underway within world politics and, more to the point, the role GCS plays in this process. This case study demonstrates that certain factions within GCS are endeavoring to modify the legitimate boundaries of state sovereignty, if not fundamentally transform the state system altogether. The significance of this development cannot be understated, yet our theoretical models lack the ability to grasp this development in all its complexity.

Chapter 6: Green Cross International

In just two decades, Green Cross International (GCI) has emerged as a prominent global player in the fight to fundamentally transform the business-as-usual model of global water governance. Under the guidance of its Founding President, Mikhail Gorbachev, GCI has played a key role in creating and promoting the Earth Charter, which defines the access to potable water as a right, and it has recently worked to enshrine this right by creating and promoting a Proposal for a Global Framework Convention on the Right to Water. However, GCI has also been a leading global advocate for recognizing the *full* value of water, including its social, environmental, *and* economic values. This chapter explains this irony as a consequence of GCI's peculiar political ontology, an ontology that has its origins in the revolutionary insights of Russian geochemist Vladimir Vernadsky. Rooted in the belief that human cognition has the capacity to fundamentally transform the biosphere, GCI has embarked on an ambitious yet strategically calculated effort to interrupt and reconfigure the normative foundation of world politics, to cultivate a sense of global solidarity, and to instill an ethic of responsibility.

By focusing on the economic and normative dimension of water governance, this chapter fills out the case study analysis of GCS. Chapters four and five revealed how The Nature Conservancy and the Council of Canadians address this problem of water governance in order to show how each fits in the history of world politics. Building on the insights provided in chapter two, this chapter applies these same methods to the case

of GCI. It provides a brief analysis of the organization's origins, structural organization, and water related interests. The chapter then offers a detailed examination of its political ontology, values, and politics, which sets the stage for the congruence analysis that follows. The chapter concludes by assessing the congruence of these findings with the theoretical expectations of transformationalist, pragmatist, and critical theoretical approaches.

Introduction to GCI

Origins

In their history of global environmental politics, Ken Conca and Geoffrey D. Dabelko (2010) examine global changes during the period between the first UN Conference on the Human Environment, in 1972, and the most recent World Summit on Sustainable Development, in 2002. Their analysis reveals six key areas of change in world political history: 1) a shift in the international political context from Cold War realpolitik to American unilateralism, 2) greater global public awareness about environmental problems, 3) increased scientific understanding, 4) dramatic growth in the number and size of national environmental bureaucracies, 5) exponential growth in the number of environmental NGOs, and 6) equally dramatic growth in the number of international environmental treaties, agreements, and environmental accords. This observation, if true, provides unique insight to the origins and nature GCI. Unlike TNC and the COC, GCI emerged during what is arguably the most critical juncture of this historic process, the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Not only did this Conference signal the end of the Cold War but it enshrined the concept of sustainable development as a universal principle of global environmental governance,

thereby opening up the search for new venues and approaches to solving global environmental problems (Tamiotti and Finger 2001). GCI is a product of this search.

Although efforts to establish GCI began in earnest in 1992, the idea of creating an international organization that “offers assistance to the states in ecological trouble” (Gorbachev 1990, 202) took shape during the late 1980s and was rooted in the Chernobyl disaster of April, 1986, when radiation released from a damaged reactor is estimated to have killed tens of thousands (Rosen 2006). This disaster spread radiation over 40% of Europe, where it caused as many as 200,000 abortions, then spread beyond Europe to contaminate parts of Asia, North Africa, and North America, exposing a total of some 400 million people to high levels of radioactivity (IAEA 2006; Nesterenko and Yablokov 2009; WNC 2009).

In addition to the negative implications for environmental and human health, Chernobyl was also a catalyst of fundamental political and economic transformations within the Soviet Union and world politics. Having just assumed the office of Soviet President the previous year, Chernobyl profoundly altered Mikhail Gorbachev’s preferences, perceptions and values. The disaster exposed Gorbachev to what he called “the sickness of our system” (as quoted in Gaddis 2005, 231), by which he meant the high levels of corruption and abuses of power that plagued Soviet society that were cited by Gorbachev and others as playing a causal role in the disaster. His remedy was to greatly accelerate liberalization policies announced the previous year, policies which were intended to use capitalism as a means of saving socialism – a lesson he had learned from Franklin Roosevelt’s experiments with socialist reforms to American capitalism during the Great Depression (Gaddis 2005). Chernobyl also shattered Gorbachev’s faith

in technological solutions to developmental and environmental problems, leading him to the “new conviction that all technological processes which might have negative effects on the health and life of the population require supervision by society” (Gorbachev 1990, 21). Furthermore, the long-term implications of the Chernobyl disaster expanded Gorbachev’s time horizons, instilling him with a much greater awareness of the intergenerational dimensions of political and economic decision-making. And, because the contamination spread across such a massive geographical area, the Chernobyl disaster made Gorbachev convinced of the urgent need for a holistic and cooperative approach to the global problems of security, trade, and environmental protection.

Between 1986 and 1989, Gorbachev and key members of his administration revealed this conviction through a series of speeches on the topics of nonproliferation and non-military sources of global insecurity. Among the most notable of these was the 1987 “Murmansk Initiative”, which laid out a set of policy initiatives aimed at establishing a nuclear-weapons free zone in Northern Europe. In the specific area of environmental protection, the Initiative called for expanding collaborative efforts which had originally been designed to protect the Baltic Sea, using this experiment as the foundation for protecting “the entire oceanic and sea surface of the globe’s North” (Gorbachev 1987, 5). In addition, the speech proposed the formation of a new cooperative effort to establish an integrated and comprehensive plan for protecting the entirety of the North, including its territorial spaces, which Northern states could then leverage against the suspicions of poor and developing countries in the South who perceived environmental standard setting and monitoring efforts as an unjustified curtailment of sovereign rights.

In her analysis of the speech and its outcomes, Kristian Atland (2008) argues that Gorbachev's speech marks a clear departure from Soviet environmental policy prior to Chernobyl, when the Soviet leadership downplayed the threat of environmental degradation or otherwise discouraged cooperative efforts to address the problem. Later speeches by Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze are consistent with Atland's thesis. These speeches conveyed a deep sense of urgency regarding the issue of environmental degradation as well as the need for coordinated efforts to overcome global environmental threats (Dabelko 2010). Indeed, these themes gained momentum over time, as is illustrated by a 1989 speech in which Shevardnadze called upon the international community to support a new UN "green helmets" program, which could function as a "Center for Emergency Environmental Assistance" (Dabelko 2010).

These efforts culminated in Gorbachev's 1990 speech to the Global Forum on Environment and Development in Moscow, during which he called for the "ecologicalization of politics" (Gorbachev 1990). Gorbachev began with the assertion that "humanity is part of the single and integral biosphere," and that the scope and pace of environmental degradation had recently emerged as an existential threat to this totality (Gorbachev 1990, 199). He went further by arguing in favor of dramatic modifications in the "factors of further progress in order to ensure man's initial right – the right to life" (Gorbachev 1990, 199). For Gorbachev, this meant finding ways to incorporate ecological externalities or costs into decisions involving production and consumption choices. It also meant making far greater investments in, and support for, scientific research. Additionally, it involved the deeper integration of ecology into education systems as well as a holistic effort to harmonize human relations with nature. If,

Gorbachev argued, humanity was part of and embedded within a single and integral biosphere, then countering the threat of environmental degradation necessitated a new binding international code of ecological ethics. Although he envisioned the UN as a key player in this effort, he also cited the need for other international organizations to play an integral role in this ecologicalization of world politics. Notably, it was at this conference that he first argued for creating an international green cross, which could supplement the UN “Green Helmets” initiative proposed the year before. Modeled after the International Red Cross, his proposed green cross would specialize in resolving environmental emergencies, like the Chernobyl disaster.

From the entirety of his speech, it was this single brief recommendation to establish an international green cross that attracted international media attention. *The New York Times* headline read, “Gorbachev Calls for Program To Save Global Environment,” *The Sun Herald* announced, “Call For World ‘Green Cross’ Plan,” and *the Guardian* labeled it as “Moscow’s ‘Green’ Debut.” During the 1992 Rio Conference, several delegates voiced their support for Gorbachev’s green cross concept and encouraged him to launch the organization (GCI 2009b). A Swiss organization, entitled “World Green Cross,” emerged at the same time and pursued the same objectives. In 1993, the two organizations merged to officially launch Green Cross International. Its stated mission “is to respond to the combined challenges of security, poverty and environmental degradation to ensure a sustainable and secure future” (GCI 2009c)

Organizational Structure

To advance this objective, Gorbachev crafted the organizational features of GCI to reflect the core governance principles he sought to advance, namely cooperation, open and

multi-sectoral participation, and transparency. The organizational model he chose was that of a democratically structured people's movement, meaning that GCI "defines, promotes, launches and implements its programs in co-operation with its National Organizations" (GCI 2009a, 3). As such, GCI adheres to a decision-making model grounded on the democratic principle of majority rule. That is, decisions are made by the majority of participants within each of the organization's decision-making bodies.

Green Cross National Organizations (NO) constitute the GCI's membership base. NOs are financially self-sufficient entities, which means they receive no financial support from GCI Headquarters. Thus, each NO is a quasi-autonomous entity. To qualify for membership, NO applicants must demonstrate their financial self-sufficiency, submit an Action Plan that describes planned projects, at least one of which must advance one of GCI's international programs, and provide information on potential board and staff members. Upon acceptance, new NOs undergo one year of probationary status, after which time they can apply for full National Organization status. As of March 2010, there were 31 NOs spread across six continents (see Figure 5 below).

GCI's supreme decision-making body is the General Assembly (see Figure 6 below). Membership of this body consists of the top elected officials from each of the NOs, the Founding President, the President and CEO, the Vice Presidents, the Treasurer, and the members of the Board of Directors. Meetings of the General Assembly are convened by the Board of Directors and are held at least once every two years. Specific powers include, but are not limited to, the election of members to the Board of Directors, review of the last two years reports and financial budget, and the resolution of all legal matters associated with GCI (GCI 2009a, 6).

Figure 5: GCI's National Organizations



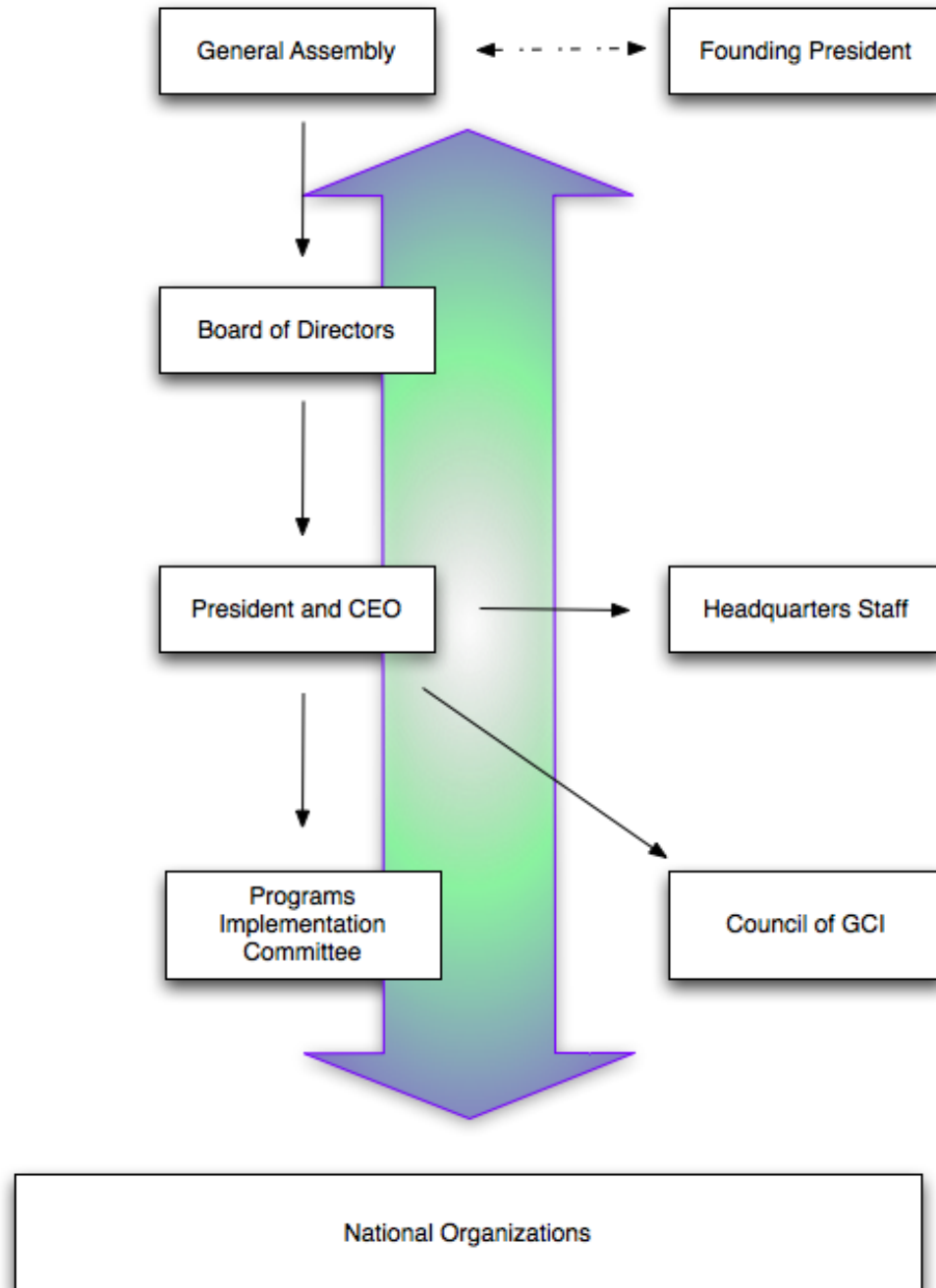
Source: <http://www.gci.ch/our-network>

The Board of Directors is GCI's central strategic and governing institution. The Board meets at least once per year to select GCI officers, including the President and CEO, review NO program reports, and other related duties. The Board consists of 5-15 members, including the Founding President, President and CEO, First Vice President, Treasurer, and others who are elected to the Board by the General Assembly. Although the GCI Charter recommends that qualifying members of NOs also serve on the Board, their inclusion is not required. Members serve two-year terms and may serve up to three consecutive terms.

The Honorary Board is an advisory body to GCI. It consists of 15-35 individuals who have volunteered their time, resources and good name to advancing GCI's objectives. Members are selected by the General Assembly and are eligible for re-election indefinitely. Honorary Board members do not have voting rights within the

organization; however, they are encouraged to propose strategies for GCI policies and the General Assembly must consider these strategies during its meetings.

Figure 6: GCI's Organization Chart



Source: <http://www.gci.ch/en/who-we-are/structure-and-organisation-of-green-cross-international>

GCI's executive body consists of the offices of its President and CEO as well as its Headquarters Staff. The President and CEO oversee the day-to-day implementation of decisions made by General Assembly and Board of Directors. In addition, the President and CEO make strategic decisions regarding how best to manage operations to advance GCI's objectives. In addition, the President and CEO chairs the GCI Council and GCI's Program Implementation Committee. Located in Geneva Switzerland, the Headquarters Staff is subordinate to the President and CEO. Its primary responsibility is to carry out the day-to-day work of the organization in a manner that is consistent with its principles and objectives.

The GCI Council consists of CEOs from the six most active NOs. It functions as the primary coordination body for all NOs, and, in this capacity, advises the President on matters of GCI management. The President nominates GCI Council members, who are then endorsed by the Board. The Board meets no less than four times per year.

The Programs Implementation Committee is made up of the Chairpersons of GCI's International Programs. These Programs include Energy, Water, Environmental Security, the Social, Medical Care, and Educational program, and the Education and Value Change program. This Committee serves as a clearinghouse for program development and advises the President on related matters. Neither the GCI Council nor the Programs Implementation Committee have voting rights.

GCI also reserves the honorary status of Founding President to Mikhail Gorbachev in recognition of his contribution to the organization and his ten-year tenure as President and CEO. This title empowers Gorbachev to serve as the organization's ambassador. As of May 2010, Alexander Likhotal filled the position of GCI President.

Likotal was a professor of international relations at Moscow University and a former advisor and spokesperson for Mikhail Gorbachev.

GCI finances its activities through two sources: the annual contributions of its members and grants, contributions and donations from international agencies, national governments, foundations, industries and individuals (GCI 2009a). However, GCI does not make its financial statements available to the public, which makes it difficult to determine who funds the organization and to what extent these funding arrangements have changed over time. What makes this particularly odd is that this policy stands in stark contrast with those of its NOs, many of which make their annual financial reports available on their websites. When asked about its policy, GCI simply replied that this information is confidential and that any information deemed suitable for the public could be found on its website (Gueorguieva 2010).

GCI in Global Water Governance

From the outset, GCI focused significant attention on freshwater resource problems. Its founding charter identifies water as one of four focus areas. The others are energy, communication and the Earth Charter, and environmental education. Specifically, the charter calls attention to the problem of water conflicts prevention and resolution. As water resources grow increasingly scarce, there is rising concern that the competition over water will devolve into intra- and inter-state conflict. This issue of water conflict prevention had attracted significant international attention throughout the early 1990s. It was made salient by a 1991 UN proposal to use the Ataturk Dam in Turkey to shut off flows of the Euphrates into an intransigent Iraq (Gleick 1993). Framing water as a security problem was partly a matter of conceptual convenience; it extended the

relevance of Cold War political theories to the new political difficulties of the post-Cold War era (Dalby 2002). An examination of GCI's other focus areas reveals *how* it would work to reduce the danger of water conflicts. It's focus on energy efficiency and conservation reveals a preference for demand-side *policy* solutions. In addition to this top-down approach, GCI's focus on environmental education, communication and the Earth Charter, points to a preference for bottom-up strategies directed toward the social construction of preferences, perceptions and values.

This sophisticated and comprehensive approach to water resource problems was partly the product its historical and institutional context. By most estimates 1992 marked a turning point in the history of global water governance (Conca 2006; Finger and Allouche 2002b). In January 1992, a preparatory meeting for the UNCED met in Dublin to specifically address global water resource problems. This meeting was noteworthy because it was the first to argue that "Water has an economic value in all its competing uses and should be recognized as an economic good" (WMO 1992). In doing so, the Dublin Conference attributed water scarcity to a single cause, which was the "past failure to recognize the economic value of water" (WMO 1992). This economic argument attracted widespread attention during the UNCED held later that year. The Conference action plan, titled *Agenda 21*, enshrined this economic principle by defining water as both a social and economic good. The action plan called for additional research on the use of economic instruments to "take into account opportunity costs and environmental externalities" (UN 1992b, 18.15). It argued that economic measures might prove beneficial to the development and strengthening of cooperation over water resource allocation and provision (UN 1992b, 18.12). This economic focus marks a dramatic

shift from the traditional emphasis on supply-side solutions to water resource problems. The fact that *Agenda 21* defines water as an economic good signifies that the international focus had shifted to demand-side water resource problems, that decision-makers sought an effective way to use public policy to solve these problems, and the widespread awareness that the best solution is one that reconfigures public preferences, perceptions, and values of water.

GCI's approach to water resource problems was also informed by Gorbachev's experiences with the Aral Sea. The Aral Sea was once the fourth largest lake in the world; it was a huge, shallow, and saline body of water located in the deserts of the south-central Soviet Union, straddling the border of present-day Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. In the 1950s, the Soviet Union diverted water from its tributaries to irrigate millions of hectares of land for cotton production. This so-called "white gold" was a key export commodity throughout the period of Soviet rule. Shortly after taking power, Gorbachev instituted a policy of Glasnost, or political transparency, which soon exposed the environmental costs these diversions imposed on the Aral Sea. By the 1990s, the surface area of the Aral Sea had shrunk by half and the water volume was down by seventy-five percent (Calder and Lee 1995). Gorbachev led an effort to redirect water back into the rivers, however, these efforts proved insufficient. By the early 1990s, growing water scarcity had caused significant tensions among several Central Asian states. Scientists now agree that there is little hope of restoring the Aral Sea to its previous size and health. Declared by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to be "one of the worst environmental disasters in the world" ("Shrinking Aral Sea underscores need for urgent action on environment" 2010), the desiccation of the Aral Sea is one of two

cases, along with the Chernobyl disaster, that Gorbachev credits with shaping his view “that the developments in science and technology of the past century bring with them not only huge benefits, but also great responsibility, as human mistakes or mismanagement can now cause irreversible damage” (Gorbachev 2007). Gorbachev attributes the mistakes and mismanagement to the “struggle for short-term profit, encouraged by the unregulated free market, [which] has led to unacceptable human and environmental abuses, often in the name of ‘economic growth’” (Gorbachev 2007). The answer, therefore, is to fully incorporate the humanitarian and environmental externalities into the price of goods and services in order to convey more accurate information to the consumer about the implications of purchasing decisions.

In sum, these early influences on Gorbachev and GCI reveal four things. First, they demonstrate that GCI emerged at a moment of widespread skepticism about the business-as-usual model of global water governance. This is most evident in the shift from supply-side to demand-side strategies of water governance, but it was reinforced for Gorbachev by his experiences with inappropriate technology in the Chernobyl and Aral Sea disasters. Second, GCI emerged at another turning point in world history – the end of the Cold War. As a cold warrior, Gorbachev likely felt comfortable defining new global political problems like water governance in the familiar context of security concerns. Third, GCI also emerged at the onset of a paradigmatic crisis in government regulation. Long experience with corruption and the lack of political transparency culminated in a backlash against direct government management, which is manifest here in the Dublin Statement redefining water as an economic good. GCI, like many others, believed that a healthy dose of market discipline might correct the bad behavior of

governments. Finally, proposals for economic solutions to demand-side problems also point to a widespread desire to reconfigure popular preferences, perceptions and values. The significance of this point will be made clearer in the discussions that follow.

Political Ontology

GCI's economic perspective on water resource problems has its roots in a unique political ontology. There is an ontological perspective that perceives humanity in its totality as a global civilization and the living world as a singular and infinitely complex unit, or biosphere. This worldview finds its philosophical footing in the work of Russian Geochemist Vladimir Vernadsky. Writing in the 1930s and 1940s, Vernadsky explored the perennial question regarding the place and role of humans in Earth's evolution. In the course of his research, Vernadsky identified three distinct phases in the Earth's evolutionary history: the geosphere, the biosphere, and the noosphere. The geosphere describes the geological epoch of Earth's evolutionary history between the Archean period and the Pleistocene when the Earth was nothing but inert matter. The biosphere denotes the geological epoch of biological life, which includes the complex totality of living and inert matter, like soil or lake water (Vernadsky 1999c). What delineates the biosphere epoch from the geosphere epoch is the evidence of shifts in the geochemical cycle of carbon. Prior to the Pleistocene, the geochemical cycle remained unchanged, yet in the biosphere epoch the geochemical composition of carbon changes over time (Vernadsky 1999a).

The noosphere marks yet another break in the evolutionary history of Earth, which can be demarcated by the "intense growth of influence of the living matter of one species (civilized humanity) upon the shift in the biosphere condition" (Vernadsky

1999b, 95). Noosphere, literally translated as the sphere of human thought, describes the emergence of scientific knowledge and organized human labor as geological forces that reconstruct the biosphere, thus marking a further shift from the evolution of species to the evolution of the biosphere. The defining attribute of this epoch is human thought, which binds all of humanity into a single totality. “If man understands this,” Vernadsky argued, “and does not use his brain and his work for self-destruction, an immense future is open before him in the geological history of the biosphere” (Verdansky 1999d, 98).

Although this noosphere concept informs GCI’s cosmopolitan ontology, GCI nonetheless recognizes a certain fragmentation within the larger global society, and argues that “all parts of this community are essential to the functioning of the whole” (GCI 2009a). These parts include businesses and governments, international organizations, other elements of the environmental movement, and globalization, conceived of as an overarching yet constructed process of modernization and excessive materialism. Because these entities constitute a single social formation, each is embedded within yet responsible for reigning in the excesses of this overarching globalization process. This implies that agency is not determined by social structure but rather has the capacity to consciously alter the structural condition. In his forward to an edited volume on the biosphere and noosphere (1999, ix), Gorbachev argues “what is really needed is a new synthesis comprising the valuable elements of many existing perspectives, including liberal and socialist values and individualist and community ideals.” This implies that normative interventions are required to reconfigure the structural dimensions of a reckless and indeed unsustainable globalization process.

To achieve this normative intervention, each element of this organic world political system must therefore exercise a higher degree of self-restraint. International organizations like the UN need more power in order to do a better job of monitoring environmental degradation and protecting areas of global importance. States need to devise more appropriate regulations and pursue more effective enforcement of these regulations. Businesses need to incorporate the full cost of their production processes into the price of their goods (Gorbachev 2001a). And NGOs need to do a better job of ensuring that the problem of development is a “subject of constant concern and attention by the international community” (Gorbachev 2000a, 246). For its part, GCI perceives itself as an “international, independent, not-for-profit, and non-governmental organization” (GCI 2009a, 1). Its peculiar political ontology, rooted in the geological and evolutionary ideas of Vernadsky, directs its energy to reconfiguring the normative foundation of world politics. This objective contrasts with the goals of the TNC, which pursues its ecological objectives within the existing normative framework of world politics. It also contrasts with the goal-seeking behavior of the COC, which endeavors to preserve a traditional normative framework against what it perceives as the threat of a new neoliberal approach. The next section describes the types of values GCI seeks to inscribe through this endeavor.

Axiology

I believe in the cosmos. All of us are linked to the cosmos. Look at the sun. If there is no sun, then we cannot exist. So nature is my god. To me, nature is sacred. Trees are my temples and forests are my cathedrals

Mikhail Gorbachev, 1997

If we accept the proposition that humanity has the capacity to consciously reconstruct the social structure through some form of normative intervention, the question then is what

norms or values will allow humankind to evolve within the limits of the biosphere? The preamble of the charter of GCI offers one possible answer. It begins with the simple statement that “all life is sacred” (GCI 2009a, 1). By this it means that all forms of life possesses intrinsic value, which implies that every element of the planetary community is essential to the functioning of the whole. In addition to their material value, all forms of life also bear certain spiritual and cultural values that rejuvenate the human spirit, “inspiring human consciousness with wonder, joy and creativity” (GCI 2009a, 1). “To preserve life in its integrity and diversity,” GCI argues we must instill all of humanity with an ethic of responsibility and restraint if we are to have any hope of preventing further “destruction and waste for short-term utilitarian reasons and to restore now the damage that we have already done” (GCI 2009a, 1).

In political terms, this means that GCI values such democratic principles as participation, transparency, and accountability. GCI understands participation as a multi-sectoral and multi-scalar process, with multi-sectoral participation referring to the open and equal involvement of members from sectors of “government, spiritual communities, science, business, the arts, education, journalism, and issue-focused activism” (GCI 2009a, 2). In contrast, multi-scalar participation refers to the participation of peoples across the global and local dimensions of a given environmental problem. A necessary step toward more effective and open participation of this sort, of course, requires a stronger ethic of tolerance for difference, which means that views or beliefs ought not to be imposed by force (Gorbachev 2000a). It also necessarily implies unprejudiced communication among participants, which is the seed for mutual understanding, trust, and a deeper sense of human solidarity (Gorbachev 2000a).

Transparency and accountability also contribute to this overarching goal of securing a sense of solidarity, which was made painfully evident in the cases of Chernobyl and the Aral Sea. In each case, it was the lack of transparency that enabled the Soviet government to pursue reckless policies and harmful environmental practices. The lesson learned was that making information and decision-making procedures open and available to the public engenders a sense of investment by society, enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of public policies, and reduces the likelihood of corruption. Indeed, this was Gorbachev's experience after implementing Glasnost within the Soviet Union and it was a policy that he enthusiastically promoted upon taking up the Presidency of GCI (Gorbachev 2000a). Accountability fills out the range of democratic values that are central to GCI's efforts to promote a deeper sense of human solidarity and advance the project of sustainability. Specifically, GCI is concerned with the accountability of states, many of which resort to claims of sovereignty as a shield against the criticism of international society. To hold states accountable, GCI supports the creation of a special code of rights and responsibilities for governments, the purpose of which is to restrain potential violators of democratic norms (Gorbachev 2000a). The next section provides a much more specific account of the strategies GCI employs to instill these norms within the world political system.

Political Characteristics

Water, like religion and ideology, has the power to move millions of people. Since the very birth of human civilization, people have moved to settle close to water. People move when there is too little of it. People move when there is too much of it. People write and sing and dance and dream about it. People fight over it. And all people, everywhere and everyday, need it.

Mikhail Gorbachev, 2000

Water has emerged as the primary vehicle through which GCI has attempted to realize its particular brand of human solidarity. Its water-related activities focus on three particular areas of the development problem. First, GCI has used the water issue as a way to intervene in the normative dimensions of the global development paradigm. It does this by contesting the sustainability of existing norms, promoting alternative norms, and supporting the reconfiguration of structural power within the political system. Second, GCI has called for greater and more effective investments in the water sector. Its investment proposals focus on the need for a full valuation of water, increases in official development assistance, and targeting governance reforms to attract private investments. Finally, GCI implements water resource initiatives that support water-resource projects designed to reduce tensions and educate people on the environmentally sustainable practices that are appropriate for those who live on or near transboundary river basins.

For a brief moment it appeared that the Rio Conference might usher in a global commitment to choosing a new direction for development and a new era of civilization, rooted both in an ethic of responsibility and mutual understanding. Indeed, had the plans and proposals made at Rio been implemented there would have been little need for an organization like GCI. But alas, too little effort was made and this brief opportunity was soon eclipsed by a retreat to the disorderly business of politics as usual. From Gorbachev's perspective, the Rio Conference had lost momentum because its outcome "did not fulfill the criteria of a genuine charter that could stand like a third pillar together with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Charter" (Gorbachev 2006, 88). Working in close cooperation with Maurice Strong, then chairman of the Earth Council and Secretary-General of the Rio Conference, Gorbachev

launched an ambitious effort to remedy this situation. His solution was to develop an Earth Charter, which could serve both as a legislative framework for sustainable development and as a kind of textbook for a new development ethic. Its core principles call for 1) building a deeper sense of respect and care for the community of life, 2) protecting and restoring ecological integrity, 3) ensuring social and economic justice, and 4) upholding democracy, nonviolence and peace. Officially published in 2000, by December 2009 the Earth Charter received over 20,000 individual endorsements and more than 5,000 organization endorsements, which represent millions of people (Jimenez and Motyrov 2009, 7). Today, GCI's efforts to implement the Earth Charter constitutes one of the organization's four focus areas and is the principal way it endeavors to modify the values and behavior of the world political system.

The Earth Charter references water in two distinct contexts. The first recognizes access to potable water and sanitation as a right, locating this right in the same category as the right to clean air, food security, and shelter (ECC 2000). In 2004, Gorbachev attempted to advance this initiative by introducing a new GCI-sponsored proposal to establish a Global Framework Convention on the Right to Water. The stated objective was to strengthen international law and legal rights regarding freshwater resources. Like all its initiatives, GCI advanced this objective by adopting a cooperative approach to problem solving. In so doing, it sought advice and support from a host of NGOs and business interests, including the World Water Council, Suez, and the International Secretariat for Water. Its proposal begins by framing the right to water to mean the "fundamental access to 'water for life,'" and "productive water" (GCI, et al. 2005). It defines "water for life" in clear terms as the sufficient quality and quantity of water

required to satisfy basic human needs for “drinking, hygiene, cleaning and cooking, and subsistence agriculture” (GCI, et al. 2005). GCI goes on to define “productive water” as water used in activities with an economic value in the marketplace. Although recognized as a distinct and separate right, this right to “productive water” is nonetheless held as “necessary and access to it must be guaranteed” (GCI, et al. 2005). The Proposal denies that water is a “mere product or simple commodity” to be exploited for “excessive profits or speculative purposes,” but is instead considered a public good while it is in its “natural state” (GCI, et al. 2005). It goes on to underscore the need to balance the right to “water for life” with that of “productive water,” asserting that the right to water should balance the needs of individuals, ecosystems, and the needs of “agriculture and cattle farming, industry and energy production, and leisure activities” (GCI, et al. 2005).

In addition to referencing the right to water, the Earth Charter also references the ecological needs for water. GCI has endeavored to advance this objective through its Water for Peace program, which promotes conservation and cooperation over shared or transboundary water resources. In one example, GCI supported efforts to reduce water-related tensions between Israel and Palestine by educating local Palestinians on the causes and consequences of groundwater pollution, with the goal of monitoring, alleviating and managing pollution there (GCI 2008). More recently, Gorbachev launched a high profile water initiative, titled “Memorandum for a World Water Protocol,” in the European Parliament on February 12, 2009. The Memorandum calls for making the inclusion of water in global climate change negotiations a high priority. It calls specific attention to the issues of conflict prevention, the right to water for all, and the need to safeguard the global water heritage for future generations. In sum, the

Memorandum calls for a new “global water political paradigm,” which involves overcoming the current paradigm of “more harvesting and more money per water drop” and replacing it with “more life and living together per water drop” (IERPE and The World Political Forum 2009, 10).

In addition to these strategic interventions into the normative dimensions of water governance, GCI also works to increase international investments in the water sector. To this end, GCI has pursued a two-pronged strategy of calling for higher and better targeted official development assistance, as well as greater predictability and transparency in national water laws to attract private investments. To advance the first objective, GCI embarked on networking activities with the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), Oxfam, CARE, and other international NGOs to lobby the Commission for Sustainable Development to double the water-related financing from donors to developing countries, to more effectively target development assistance to those countries with the greatest need, and to pressure national governments to assess the full economic, social and environmental values of their ecosystems so that they can incorporate this information into their water resources decision-making (CSD NGO Consortium 2005). Working independently, GCI has endeavored to reframe the global economic recession as an opportunity to shift from the kinds of harmful investments that were typical of the previous free-market economic model to a more sensible and long-term approach that features green investments in areas like water infrastructure, investments that “can be a veritable panacea not just for the current economic crisis but can be a structural correction for the world economy as such” (Likhotal 2009).

At the national level, GCI has been a vocal advocate of state-level regulatory reforms that attract private-sector investments in the water and sanitation sector. In a lecture entitled “Gulf Security and Regional Watercourse Management: Implications for the UAE” (2005, 23), then GCI Vice President Bertrand Charrier argued “users, not taxpayers, should pay the full cost of water delivery and there should be a compensation system for poor people. To conserve water and reduce demand, everyone should have to pay something, with the ultimate goal of paying for water supply and sanitation in full.” Charrier goes on to observe that public funding is in a state of decline that will likely continue into the foreseeable future. Thus, he concludes “it is imperative that public funds be used only for purposes for which it would be impossible to attract other sources” (2005, 24). To attract private funds, he argues it is necessary to ensure both a predictable and transparent regulatory framework, as well as one that protects the interests of investors and consumers. Yet even with these reforms, Charrier observes that the need for significant government subsidies will likely persist and therefore that governments may still be required to maintain their budgets at current levels (Charrier 2005). What private sector involvement offers then is the promise of much needed investments and technology transfers. In a region estimated to need some \$200 billion in additional water investments by 2025 (Permal 2010), this analysis was likely received as a heavy dose of sobering news.

In addition to the strategies listed above, GCI also implements water resource initiatives at the local level. For example, through its Smart Water for Green Schools initiative, GCI finances the construction and implementation of rainwater harvesting and

ecological latrines⁴ at schools adjacent to transboundary river systems around the globe. A pilot project began in 2010 and will focus on the La Plata, Volta, Mekong, and Jordan River Basins. As of this writing, the first project was underway in Ghana at a school situated within the Volta River Basin. Here, GCI and its corporate partner Pureology are financing the construction of a 5,000 gallon rainwater harvesting tank and a number of ecological latrines. GCI predicts that these systems will provide a much needed and reliable supply of safe drinking water while offering the added benefit of educating the local population on the kinds of environmental practices that are appropriate for transboundary river basins (GCI 2010).

Congruence Analysis

This empirical analysis of GCI offers an additional insight to the variability within GCS. Whereas the particular perceptions, values and behaviors of previous case studies highlighted non-governmental activity associated with the environmental and public dimensions of water resources, this chapter focused instead on that subset of actors that privileges an economic approach to the global water crisis. This section will explore the unique problems this principled position poses to the competing theoretical interpretations of the role GCS plays in the history of world politics. Specifically, the theoretical challenge presented in this case study centers on the disconnect between GCI's rhetoric and its behavior. Can the transformationalist insistence that GCS constitutes a contentious and self-directed political sphere accommodate GCI's collaborative approach and its close associations with state and corporate interests? Can pragmatists' concern for the role of strategic innovation and strategic diffusion prove

⁴ Ecological latrines are toilets that use little or no water and have the ability to generate fertilizer that is safe for agricultural use.

sufficient to explain the consistency of perceptions and values that are central to GCI's strategic behavior? Can critical concerns for the diversity of cultural norms and values provide relevant insights to the disconnect between GCI's rhetoric and behavior? This section endeavors to flesh out these and other questions in order to adjudicate these competing theoretical takes on the way GCS fits in the history of world politics.

Transformationalist

There is much here that recommends a transformationalist interpretation of GCI and its wide ranging efforts to reconfigure the landscape of global water governance, not the least of which is an ontological perspective that reduces all of humanity to a single and interdependent totality – a geological and evolutionary force unified and distinguished by the capacity to reason yet plagued by an irrational tendency for self destruction, a tendency that is most evident in the disorderly fragmentation of the world political system into egoistic nation-states. GCI marks a departure from this destructive reality, and it is because of this that transformationalists would interpret it as something new on the world political scene. It marks the emergence of a new political sphere, they might argue, one that is less committed to the idea of the sovereign state for its own sake than the evolution and prosperity of humanity in its totality. Its goal to interrupt and reconstruct the very normative foundation of development would certainly appear to transformationalists as an act of defiance or rejection of the state-centric world political system, just as its ecological work in Palestine and Ghana might appear the same. Specifically, transformationalists would interpret GCI's efforts to shaping the discourse over the human right to water or sustainable development as proof positive that the rise of this NGO has coincided with a decline of the state, since such influence, whether it is

manifest on the states themselves or on their populations, must certainly constrain the ways that states conduct their affairs. How else can we explain the lasting appeal of something like the Earth Charter, which is evident in the endorsements of so many inter-governmental organizations, NGOs, universities, cities, and individuals? Certainly this effort, directed not at states but rather at the normative framework within which states operate, must necessarily enhance the stature and autonomy of an organization like GCI to the detriment of the self-centered state.

But transformationalists would nonetheless struggle to account for the utter absence of contentious politics or the belief, expressed here by Gorbachev, that “it takes strong states to confront a world in rapid transformation” (Gorbachev 2004, xvi). GCI does seek to bring about a radical transformation in the history of world politics but one that is fundamentally normative, not structural. It seeks to interrupt the business-as-usual conception of development, which emphasizes only the right to liberty – a negative right of non-interference - by privileging instead a deep sense of positive obligations through its preferred ethic of responsibility. Its goal is not to wither the state and thereby elevate the role of GCS but rather to follow the ethical mandates of this ethic of responsibility by taking positive steps to redress environmental harms when they occur and, whenever possible, to prevent them from occurring in the first place. In the pursuit of this objective, GCI has focused its effort on the global water crises because water is something everyone needs, which means that a normative transformation of global water governance has “the power to move millions of people” (Gorbachev 2000b).

In her book, *Taking Action, Saving Lives*, Kristen Shrader-Frechette (2007, 177) argues that in avoiding the worst problems, like the problem of development, to focus

instead on very clear sub-problems for which complete remedies are achievable, groups like GCI strategically circumvent theoretical disagreements over different rationalities. As a result, sub-problem successes are then used as a basis for building momentum to tackle the overarching problem. To be effective in achieving their ultimate goal, however, the actors who follow this small-wins strategy must keep their eyes on the prize. As this chapter has made clear, the prize for GCI is the normative reconfiguration of world politics, not the kind of structural and ontological reconfiguration transformationalists lead us to expect. To achieve this larger objective, GCI has pursued a variety of top-down and bottom-up efforts that seek to realize this through an incremental process of gradual reform. From the top-down, GCI has called on states to fully implement existing commitments regarding the allocation and provision of water resources. Since to do so would necessarily empower states, it seems clear that GCI's argument works to reinforce rather than to weaken the position of states in the world political system.

Similarly, its bottom-up efforts to induce a normative change in the global governance of water resources primarily focus on the full valuation of water, which includes its economic, social and environmental values. The purpose of doing so is twofold. First, this effort is designed to establish a new set of criteria to guide decision-making over water resources. Second, a full and transparent valuation of water is essential for overcoming the information deficits that plague the water supply and sanitation sectors. Criticisms aside, the point in defining water as an economic good is to effectively convey information about the scarcity of the resource so that the individuals and groups can act as a check against attempted abuses of power. Since both goals seek

to reconfigure *and* empower the roles of states and markets in the domain of global water governance, the ontological claims made by transformationalists do not appear to stand up in this case.

Pragmatists

Because pragmatists sidestep these ontological issues by focusing on the political or strategic dimensions of GCS, it may appear that they offer a more satisfactory account of the way GCI fits into the history of world politics. From a pragmatic point of view the primary function of GCS is to provide information for the purpose of changing decision-maker's minds. Its ability to perform this function determines its degree of influence within, or value to, the world political system (Betsill and Corell 2008).

This pragmatic lens draws our attention first to the types of activities GCI undertakes to transmit its information about the global water crisis to decision-makers. Here, pragmatists would likely point to GCI's efforts to create and implement the Earth Charter as an example of strategic innovation in the generation and dissemination of information regarding widespread discontent with the business as usual models of global water governance specifically and development more generally. Pragmatists would also point to its continuous involvement in international water conferences like the World Water Forum as another signifier of its relevance and influence within the world political system. Additionally, pragmatists would interpret its networking activities, which are multi-sectoral and multi-scalar, as yet another sign of its political relevance and potential influence within world politics. The fact that GCI has been granted access to a wide range of venues to transmit its information provides further evidence of its relevance and

potential influence. These venues range from the European Parliament to political negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis.

Pragmatists would also point to several of GCI's resources as critical assets to its continued relevance and potential influence within the world political system. These resources include its organizational expertise in the area of water conflict negotiation and resolution, popular support for its Earth Charter initiative, as well as its large network of National Organizations. Although the problem of counterfactuals makes it difficult to establish a clear causal chain (Sekhon 2004), the strongest evidence of GCI's influence is found in the thousands of organizational endorsements for its Earth Charter initiative, endorsements that represent millions of people around the world.

Yet for all these strengths, the pragmatic approach loses sight of the forest for the trees. In this case, it tends to look only where the "light is brightest: on actors and their actions rather than on the interplay of agents with structures" (Lipschutz 2006b, 110). By focusing on these actions alone, pragmatists miss the values and objectives that spawn and guide these actions. Thus, they overlook the more profound role GCI plays in world politics. Its goal is not merely to influence decision-makers but rather to interrupt and reconfigure the normative framework of global governance. This, after all, is the key reason GCI focuses so much attention on the issue of global water governance. It views water not just as an effective means of reconstructing the rules and decision-making procedures of world politics but also as a way of reconfiguring the preferences, perceptions and values of millions of people. Thus, pragmatists cannot account for the fact that its "small-wins" strategic move to target water resource problems is part of a larger strategic effort designed to remake the landscape of world politics.

Critical Theory

Given its overarching concern for preserving the heterogeneity of values and cultural understandings within the world political system, a critical theory approach offers the most satisfactory theoretical account of GCI's role within the world political system.

This is due to the fact that GCI is fundamentally focused on interrupting and reconfiguring the normative framework of world politics. Effectively, GCI argues that the normative paradigm of world politics is significant because it determines the practices of global governance, the kinds of problems that system of governance can solve, and what constitutes a legitimate problem-solution. GCI's complaint is that the current normative paradigm projects a neo-liberal conception of development, that this paradigm has failed to resolve multiple critical problems within the system, that it is no longer possible to evade these problems, and therefore it is necessary to establish a new set of normative commitments of global governance. The strength of critical theory is that it provides the necessary tools to evaluate the axiological implications of GCI's normative propositions for solving the perceived normative crisis within the world political system.

The strengths of the critical approach are that it draws attention to the implications of GCI's argument for a universal normative realignment of water governance and world politics, it raises some important questions about the disconnect between GCI's rhetoric and its behavior, and opens up additional questions about its democratic contribution to the world political system. GCI's normative framework rests on the assertion of global solidarity. To quote Gorbachev, "If we are to deal successfully with the environmental crisis, the persistent, widening gap between rich and poor, the epidemics of new, previously unknown diseases, and finally the challenge of terrorism, we must work together, in concert" (Gorbachev 2004, xvi). Critical theorists would say

that such a claim of universality is warranted, but that it can be problematic if it results in the homogenizing of difference into sameness (Blaney and Inayatullah 2002). This means that claims to universality should respect cultural differences and be cognizant of the historical and structural forces that caused inequality. At least on paper, it seems the solidarity GCI seeks to project is one that is sensitive to the problem of cultural difference and the need to protect the heterogeneity of values and cultural norms. However, according to Gorbachev, “we need to find a paradigm that will integrate all the achievements of the human mind and human action, irrespective of which ideology or political movement can be credited with them” (Gorbachev 2001b, 13). This concern for diversity is most evident in the Earth Charter, which speaks to both the issues of biological diversity as well as cultural diversity.

There is, however, a lingering concern for the disconnect between GCI’s rhetoric and its actions. In his lecture in the UAE, Bertrand Charrier revealed a tendency to slip from the use of economic mechanisms as a conveyance of information to a conveyance of profit. As Charrier made clear, GCI supports government restructuring efforts designed to reduce the state’s role and increase that of the private sector. Ironically, Charrier also admits that this effort will do little to reduce the budgetary burdens of the state since the needs to preserve subsidies to the poor will continue into the foreseeable future. Critical theorists would argue that to take such a position only works to reinforce and extend the kind of neo-liberal development model that GCI seems to oppose. These concerns also extend to GCI’s human rights proposal. One critical legal analysis has argued that its “conflation of commercial and human rights fundamentally undermines that very rationale for a new international instrument concerning water as a *human right*, which is

to guarantee that priority be given to human not commercial interests” (Sack Goldblatt Mitchell 2005, 1-2. emphasis added). The analysis goes on to fault the proposal for defining water as a commodity and for its tacit consent to privatization and free-market policies, explaining that these methods “do not offer a viable model for providing social or public services” (Sack Goldblatt Mitchell 2005, 2). However, the most damaging characteristic, according to the analysis, is its use of a human rights instrument to impose free-market economic policies. The authors allege that this constitutes “an unprecedented incursion of such policies into the sphere of international human rights law” (Sack Goldblatt Mitchell 2005, 2).

Beyond the obvious questions such concerns generate about GCI’s commitment to constructing a new more responsible world order, there are lingering questions about GCI’s democratic credentials. From an organizational perspective, GCI is only imperfectly democratic. Its reluctance to disclose its financial statements suggests that lack of internal transparency that is antithetical to the kind of global democratic values it often proclaims. Furthermore, the fact that it limits membership to National Organizations raises additional concerns about legitimacy and accountability, although these legitimacy concerns are somewhat offset by its role in creating and promoting the Earth Charter.

One of the most common criticisms of critical theory is that it fails to offer a viable alternative to a given problem. In this case, however, it is not entirely clear that the problems posed by GCI’s support for privatization nor its organizational structure are so critical as to recommend an alternative. One key contribution of critical theory is its capacity to illuminate who is likely to pay and who is likely to suffer. In this particular

case, it is unclear whether the actions of GCI will eventually conform to the rhetoric or vice versa. GCI's close ties to privatization advocates like the World Water Council and Suez might suggest an answer. Yet, GCI also remains a staunch supporter of the Earth Charter, which is decidedly not a free-market doctrine. Thus, from a critical theory perspective, the answer to how GCI fits in the history of world politics remains decidedly ambiguous. However, critical theory typically frames ambiguity as an analytical strength, not as a problem to be overcome. Because critical theory situates actors and their actions within their historical and situational contexts, the story of their implications for world politics is often left incomplete. In other words, the critical theoretical approach to diachronic analysis does not make any pretence to the type of predictions often associated with positivism. Rather, the purpose of critical theory is often to frustrate taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature of the world political system and the political phenomena that animates this system. Thus, when viewed through a critical lens, an ambiguous conclusion is also often a satisfactory one insofar as this ambiguity functions to create a measure of uncertainty and doubt into the purposes and implications of an agent and its actions.

Conclusion

This chapter suggests that critical approaches to GCS offer the best insights into how GCI fits in the history of world politics. If actors within GCS pursue reforms to the fundamental norms and values of global governance, the question from a critical perspective is whether the alternative values they propose are sensitive to the diversity of cultural understandings and values that animate the world political system. In this case the disconnect between GCI's rhetoric and its behavior raises doubts about the nature of

its relationship to the hegemonic historic bloc, a global social formation perceived by critical theorists as a singularly self-interested and undemocratic political threat to this diversity. On one hand, GCI's political ontology and values both suggest that the organization marks a new and progressive axiological break in the history of world politics. On the other hand, the analysis of GCI's strategic behavior suggests that it also supports for-profit policies, policies that work to reinforce and project the interests and values of the hegemonic historic bloc. Because this is a problem that neither the transformationalist nor pragmatist approaches revealed, this finding suggests that the critical approach offers the most satisfactory insights to the way GCI fits in the history of global water governance, and, at a more abstract level, into the history of world politics as well.

Chapter 7: GCS, Global Water Governance and the History of World Politics

This dissertation argues that theoretical deliberations on global civil society (GCS) have entered a new developmental stage. Chapters one and two described the first stage as a process of hypothesis acceptance. Some early theoretical accounts of post-Cold War politics boldly claimed to discover the emergence of a new phenomenon in the history of world politics - GCS. A small group of scholars took up this theory and set to work gaining widespread acceptance for their claim that the sudden flurry of transnational non-governmental activity should be viewed in its totality as a singular political entity. The successful conclusion of this initial stage occurred sometime in the late 1990s, when the concept of GCS finally gained inclusion into the contemporary political lexicon. However, the successful conclusion of this outward-looking phase gave way to arrival of a new inward-looking phase, as scholars undertook the task of defining the conceptual parameters of GCS. What exactly are its defining characteristics? Does it have any inherent tendencies? For example, how does it function? Does it exhibit any normative biases? And what is the nature of its relations with the other elements of the world political system? Over time, the effort to answer these and other related questions splintered what had been a small but coherent theoretical conversation into three distinct and incommensurate theoretical camps. This dissertation has embarked on the ambitious goal to adjudicate this contemporary theoretical debate.

In Chapter three I argued that the global water crisis offers an interesting opportunity to achieve this end. Why? Because water is something everyone needs. We need reliable and safe access to drinking water to stay healthy. We need it to fuel our industries and produce our food. Sometimes we need it to for aesthetic or cultural reasons too. So when the governance of water resources breaks down, the effects tend to be immediate and widespread. As just one example, the United Nations (UN) estimates the death toll from recent flooding in Pakistan is upwards of 1500 and warns that this number is likely to rise (Charbonneau 2010). Unsafe and insufficient water supplies are also serious and immediate concerns. The World Health Organization estimates that one child dies every twenty seconds from preventable water-related disease (Ordzhonikidze 2008). We only need compare the immediacy and severity of water governance problems with issues of climate change or deforestation, each of which are serious and pressing issues in their own right, to understand the relative import of water resource problems. While the latter issues are significant problems they nonetheless generate effects that we measure in years or generations, not days and minutes. As a result, water resource problems generate the degree of urgency that is often missing in the global climate change and deforestation debates. Breakdowns in water governance prompt people to take action. But scratch the surface of any local or national water resource issue and you will likely expose a problem of global dimensions.

The paradox of scholarship on global water governance consists in the persistent failure to pay serious attention to the role GCS plays in this story. The exception to this point is Ken Conca's recent work on the global water governance, yet his findings have thus far failed to stimulate any durable consideration of GCS among water resource

scholars. It is a goal of this dissertation therefore to advance this cause by once again calling attention to the need for additional research on this issue. One unanticipated discovery in this dissertation is that it offers a glimpse of the vast depth and breadth of GCS activity in the domain of global water governance. The organizations studied in this project play an important role in shaping the rules, norms and decision-making procedures of global water governance. They undertake extensive ecological projects. For example, The Nature Conservancy's water conservation project in the Condor Bioserve is so large that it has implications for nearly every aspect of the biosphere. GCS plays a prominent role as well in shaping widespread preferences, perceptions and values about water. For example, the Council of Canadians has been instrumental in normalizing the human right to water as a global ethic of water resources governance.

This concluding chapter draws on these case studies to construct an overarching congruence analysis, the goal of which is to offer recommendations for theoretical revision. The chapter begins with a brief review of the congruence analysis methodology presented in chapter one, specifically focusing on its strengths and limitations. In sum, congruence analysis offers an effective way of clarifying and refining theories that lack the degree of clarity and internal consistency to be tested in a more rigorous way. Building on this foundation, the chapter flows into a systematic congruence analysis of the three theoretical perspectives on the role GCS plays in the history of world politics. This inquiry begins with the transformationalist perspective, which describes GCS as an ontological break in the history of world politics. In this section, the key concern is whether the case studies justify the transformationalist assertion of a zero-sum configuration of power in the world political system. In the next section, the chapter

presents an analysis of the pragmatic claim that GCS marks a political or strategic break in world political history. In this section, the core question is whether the pragmatic claim of mutual and strategic gains offers a sufficient and satisfactory account of the role GCS plays in the world political system. The final section focuses on the axiological claims emanating from critical theory. Here, the key question is whether the critical concern for axiological diversity can provide a satisfactory account of the role GCS plays as an agent of incremental structural change. The chapter concludes by offering additional reflections on this subject as well as suggestions for future research.

Congruence Method

In their analysis of qualitative case study research methods, Blatter and Blume (2008) note that the main mechanism of control in the congruence method is the rivalry between multiple theories. For the congruence method to be effective, the authors warn that these theories must be coherent and conceptually rich. This means that the theories must go beyond merely presenting a hypothesis regarding the causal relationship between an independent and dependent variable. Instead, these theories should contain 1) discrete ontological assumptions about the most important actors, 2) competing observations of causal processes, and 3) different explanations of actors' preferences, perceptions, and values. The congruence method pits these abstract concepts and predictions against concrete observations in order to determine the relative worth or validity of the competing theoretical frameworks. To make these determinations, Blatter and Blume (2008, 328) recommend "giving most weight to the conceptual core of a theoretical framework," as opposed to the alternative method of weighing and counting every match and mismatch between prediction and outcome. While this approach is insufficiently

rigorous to make a clear determination about which theory is right and which is wrong, it does reveal their relative explanatory strength. Such insights promote the immediate goal of theoretical refinement and the ultimate goal of producing a theoretical framework capable of withstanding the rigors of a process-tracing approach.

The Transformationalist Approach

The first of these is the transformationalist approach, which argues that the root cause of our failure to solve global problems like water governance rests in the collective inability to move beyond our state-centric imagination (Wapner 1991). This argument rests on two observations. First, that states and international organizations have been increasingly forced to contend with transnational non-governmental actors who challenge their governance authority. Based on this observation, transformationalists argue that GCS is a contentious and democratizing political force (Kaldor 2003a; Keane 2001; Lipschutz 1992, 2006b). Their second observation is that many of the activities associated with GCS often ignore the state entirely. Transnational non-governmental actors frequently take it upon themselves to directly engage in governance activities of their own. This observation leads to the assertion that GCS constitutes a self-directed political sphere (Wapner 1996). What fuses these various arguments into a coherent whole is the shared assumption that there is a finite quantity of power within the world political system, so that the gains made by one actor or set of actors must be offset by losses elsewhere within the system. It is this conception of a zero-sum system that forces the issue of autonomy to the fore. Transformationalists perceive autonomy as *the* manifestation of power, which makes it essential for measuring power variations within the system. It is therefore

taken as self-evident that recent increases in the scope and scale of GCS have coincided with a withering of the roles that states and markets play within this system.

Yet the findings in this dissertation offer no support for the transformationalist perspective. That is, the case studies did not substantiate the claim that the rise of GCS coincides with the withering of states and/or markets. On the contrary, all three case studies revealed GCS to be a strong advocate for modifying the state, if only to increase the state's authority over environmental resources. Through its Parks in Peril program, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) worked to build the state's capacity to more effectively govern natural parks. TNC's other water resource activities, including its payment for ecosystem services proposals and its leadership on the issue of environmental flows are also directed toward expanding and refocusing the state's authority over water resource problems. Likewise, the Council of Canadians (COC's) efforts to enshrine the human right to water in national and international law functions to expand the state's authority over water resource governance. What the COC opposes is the loss of democratic decision-making that coincides with privatization. It therefore perceives the state as a bulwark against the perceived pressure of encroaching non-democratic market forces. Green Cross International (GCI) also works to establish a stronger state role as part of its long-range strategic plan to reorder the normative foundations of world politics. From this perspective, building a strong state is tantamount to instilling an ethic of responsibility across such a large and diverse global population.

While the data gathered for this study is insufficient to conclusively falsify the transformationalist claim of an ontological break in the history of world politics, it does nevertheless support the alternative hypothesis that power within this system is of an

unbounded quantity. This study finds that even the most contentious political actor works for the expansion of state authority in the domain of global water governance. This suggests that the recent expansion of GCS has not crowded out the state, as transformationalists expect, but rather that it has been ancillary to the state, which is a claim that is more in-line with the theoretical accounts of pragmatists and critical theorists. Certainly, there is always the possibility that other elements of GCS may seek to undermine or weaken the state, perhaps to make way for the expansion of market forces or the introduction of other non-state governance mechanisms. However, as such actors are embedded within the larger domain of GCS, their preferences and actions alone cannot be interpreted as being tantamount to the characteristics of the larger totality. In sum, it seems clear that the introduction of GCS is only problematically described in terms of a zero-sum game, in which GCS gains power only at the expense of other key elements within the world political system.

The Pragmatic Approach

The data uncovered in this dissertation does lend a high degree of credibility to the pragmatic argument that GCS marks a political or strategic break in the history of world politics. This argument diverges from the transformationalist approach in its assumption that GCS remains firmly embedded within the existing state-centered power structure of the world political system. Building on this assumption, pragmatists argue that GCS constitutes an expanding domain of strategic innovation and diffusion within this overarching structure. Some pragmatists allege that the expansion of GCS enables domestic political actors to sidestep structural roadblocks at the domestic level by facilitating the creation of transnational advocacy coalitions that bring external pressure

to bear on domestic political authorities (Keck and Sikkink 1998a). Others assert that GCS elevates the status of certain knowledgeable transnational non-governmental actors in decision-making processes (Haas 1992). Still others examine the formal and informal negotiations between GCS and states to reveal the multiple ways in which GCS elevates the status of particular issues on the international agenda (Betsill and Corell 2008; Friedman, et al. 2005).

What these theorists share in common is an overarching interest in the role GCS plays in the production and strategic use of knowledge. This implies that pragmatists do not perceive knowledge as power but instead as a means of attaining and conveying power, which they define as influence (Betsill and Corell 2008). This also suggests that power is not a finite quantity but is instead without bounds, which means that mutual gains within the world political system are both possible and preferable. One actor does not have to lose so another can win. Instead success depends on the strategic production and deployment of knowledge. Pragmatists argue that GCS is instrumental to this success because it facilitates the expansion and diffusion of the strategic repertoire.

Each of the three case studies revealed the pragmatic approach to be an effective tool for revealing the strategic implications of GCS. In the TNC case, the pragmatic expectation of strategic learning and innovation offered a plausible explanation for the shift in TNC's core values, from an ecocentric position that emphasized the need to save nature *from* people to a more anthropocentric position that stressed the need to save nature *for* people. Put simply, pragmatists expect non-governmental actors to set aside their core values when they perceive these values as a critical barrier to achieving their strategic objectives. The TNC case was also consistent the pragmatist hypothesis linking

power/influence to strategic innovation and diffusion. This hypothesis accounts for TNC's significant influence in world politics, attributing this success to its production of knowledge about environmental problems and its efforts to disseminate this knowledge through its partnerships with international organizations, states, corporations, NGOs, and indigenous groups.

The pragmatic approach also accounts for COCs limited success in enshrining the human right to water in national and international law. Pragmatists argue that non-governmental actors are most likely to succeed 1) when they obtain access to the decision-making process, 2) when they effectively convey information to the decision-makers involved in this process, and 3) when they make judicious use of their resources so as to shape the decisionmaking outcome (Betsill and Corell 2008). In this case, COC's contentious strategies often make it a political outsider. On those rare occasions when the organization gained access it frequently pursued radical tactics that reduced its credibility within the institutional setting. It is no coincidence, however, that the COC scored its most significant success after its national chairperson, Maude Barlow, accepted an advisory position inside the U.N. General Assembly. To the extent that the COC nevertheless holds fast to a contentious strategy, pragmatists would predict that this success might well prove to be the high-water mark of its human rights initiative.

Pragmatic expectations also proved effective in explaining the limited success of GCI's efforts to resolve water resource conflicts. GCI is regularly granted access to decisionmakers. By framing the problem and problem-solution in universal terms, its claims often resonate with the preferences, perceptions and values of many decisionmakers. In addition, GCI has enhanced its credibility by undertaking direct

efforts to address the key causes of water conflicts. Although its efforts to promote the Earth Charter have been successful in earning widespread support, they have been less successful in bringing about the kinds of global normative transformation is GCIs overarching objective. This is largely because the Earth Charter marks a dramatic departure from the business-as-usual model of sustainable development. Thus, in spite of receiving significant global support for this initiative, GCI has framed the Charter in a way that does not resonate with key global decisionmakers.

In spite of these theoretical strengths, this dissertation exposed several critical flaws in the pragmatic perspective. In the COC case, the pragmatic expectation that actors will privilege goal attainment over core values did not materialize. Even in the face of repeated and devastating failures, the COC refused to set aside its principled commitment to deliberative democracy. Indeed, at a critical juncture in the organization's history – the passage of NAFTA – the organization renewed its committed to this core value by setting out to project this value into the transnational sphere. Above all, it was this enduring commitment that attracted international attention to the COC, culminating with Maude Barlow's appointment as senior advisor on water issues to the President of the United Nation's General Assembly.

In the case of GCI, pragmatic expectations regarding strategic behavior proved too narrow to fully capture the significance of GCIs contribution to global water governance. This flaw is partly a consequence of failing to grant sufficient weight to the role that values play in shaping behavior. GCI's overarching goal is to interrupt and reconfigure the preferences, perceptions and values of water governance, aligning them in accordance to its particular conceptions of ecological sustainability. Because

pragmatists focus on the interactions of actors and institutional outcomes, their model failed to reveal the political relevance of GCIs ecological work and other non-institutional activities.

More importantly, these flaws speak to a more critical problem with the pragmatic perspective on strategic behavior. Theoretically, strategic behavior begins when an actor confronts a particular situational context. Given this context, the actor assesses the situation and rank-orders her preferred outcomes then decides which among a range of possible actions is best suited to maximizing her probability of achieving this preferred outcome. Pragmatists clearly understand the process up to this point. What they misdiagnose are the origins of actor preferences. As a rule, pragmatists assume that preferences are determined by motives, shift in the opportunity structure, and the ability to rationalize behavior. Therefore, pragmatists expect actors to cast aside their core values when they prove inconvenient to achieving some strategic objective. Pragmatists insist that the most preferred outcome is one that maximizes an actor's influence (Betsill and Corell 2008), and they are particularly interested in the ways that influence is manifest or achieved in an institutional context. However, this dissertation revealed that core values are not so lightly cast aside. Furthermore, it demonstrated that considerations of institutional influence are not always the overriding concern in strategic decisionmaking processes. Thus, while the pragmatic approach may prove helpful for granting insights to the role GCI plays in a given institutional context, as the sum of these institutional activities do not define the totality of its political endeavors the pragmatic approach was ultimately poorly suited to explaining how GCI fits in the history of world politics.

Again, neither the methodology nor the data allow for a conclusive rejection of the pragmatic approach. Rather, what these findings reveal instead is a pressing need to revise pragmatic conceptions of power and influence. In their study of NGO influence, Betsill and Corell (2008) define power as capabilities, or the sum of the available resource an actor possesses. Influence is distinct, they argue, because it points to the relations between actors. Specifically, it describes the ability of one actor to convince another to do something she would not do otherwise. The pragmatic conception of power is unsatisfactory because it overlooks or denies the relational dimension of the term. Capabilities only convey power in certain situations or contexts. For example, U.S. military capabilities do not convey power in its relations with France, but they do convey power in the course of its relations with Iran or North Korea. Hence, power is not merely the sum of capabilities. Rather, power is a measure of the skill with which an actor leverages her capabilities in order to increase the probability of achieving a preferred outcome.

In many instances, pragmatists are correct in their assertion that greater influence is the most preferred outcome. Certainly, the US has endeavored to leverage its economic and diplomatic capabilities to influence French foreign policy toward Iraq and Afghanistan, just as it has also worked to influence Iran's policies on nuclear proliferation. However, when the action shifts to an institutional or multilateral context, influence is rarely the end but is rather best understood as a means to an end. Were it otherwise, actors would rarely opt out of multilateral negotiations or international institutions. Hence, influence is not distinct from power but is instead a particular manifestation of power. Because GCI is concerned with the global dimension of water

resource problems and because it believes the root cause of this problem resides in the flawed normative foundation of world politics, its most preferred outcome is one that interrupts and reconfigures these norms in order to bring about a deeper sense of solidarity and a more harmonious and sustainable relationship with nature. Thus, GCI's ability to leverage its influence within a given institution or multilateral negotiation is perceived by GCI as yet another means of achieving its most preferred outcome. This means that influence is not distinct from power; rather, influence functions as a capability an actor can draw upon to maximize her probability of achieving some desired objective. And just as states can misjudge and misuse their military capability, thereby diminishing their power, so too can NGOs abuse or misuse their influence. GCI's foray into the contested domain of human rights may well prove to be a case in point.

Critical Theory

In the final analysis, the critical theory perspective offers the most satisfactory account of how GCS fits in the history of world politics. That is, the evidence presented in this dissertation supports the claim that GCS marks an axiological break in the world political system. However, this conclusion comes with an important caveat. While the cases investigated in this dissertation confirm the expectation that GCS tends to function as a means of projecting and normalizing the values of a dominant global capitalist class, it would nevertheless be a mistake to conclude that GCS is necessarily a counter-democratic development. In the simplest terms, GCS is a contested political domain. Indeed, there are already signs that a vibrant counterhegemonic element within GCS has emerged in recent weeks to challenge the austerity measures instituted throughout Europe and South America. My point is not that this activism will develop into a durable

counterhegemonic force but rather that GCS contains the seeds for such a development to hold. Therefore, I agree with Jan Art Scholte (2007, 27) when he argues, “given highly diverse cultural, economic, political and social circumstances across the world, every global civil society initiative must chart its own way to greater democracy.”

For critical theorists, the modality or encoding of power is a central concern. Critical theory perspectives grow out of the normative claim that the diversity of values and cultural understandings within the world political system is an attribute we should protect and nourish, not a problem to be overcome. In applying this normative framework to GCS, critical theorists have investigated the extent with which GCS can recognize and accommodate cultural diversity (Blaney and Inayatullah 2006; Inayatullah and Blaney 2004). Studies also focus on the structural origins of cultural homogeneity in order to position GCS in relation to these structural features (Stavis 2005).

Consequently, critical theorists are less concerned with variations in the scope and scale of power. Rather, they are more concerned with whether particular configurations of power tend to reinforce the realm of hegemony that is supportive of the *status quo* or the realm of counterhegemony in which emancipatory forces can be constituted (Cox 1999).

GCS reinforces the realm of hegemony when its values and practices conform to the established social order rather than working to bring about its transformation into “heterogeneous (global, regional and local) social processes and political arrangements, involving complex ways of demarcating and negotiating, separate, shared, and overlapping authority” (Blaney and Inayatullah 2002, 130). This observation marks a departure from the transformationalist insistence on the self-directed nature of transnational non-governmental activity. It departs as well from the pragmatist assurance

of the possibility of progressive incremental reform. For critical theorists, an actor either supports the status quo or she seeks the radical transformation of the world political system – there is no middle ground. Because critical theorists perceive GCS to be a product of powerful state and capital interests, they expect it to support the *status quo* by reinforcing and extending the preferences, perceptions and values of this hegemonic historic bloc (Cox 1997)

The three case studies lend significant support to the critical theoretical expectation that GCS tends to reflect the dominance of state and corporate power. Of these, TNC offers the strongest support for this view. In expanding its global footprint, TNC brought its values into conformity with those of its state and corporate sponsors. Once transformed, TNC became the agent of these entrenched interests by working to normalize the commodification of water through its payment for ecosystem services schemes. Rather than challenge the *status quo*, TNC works behind the scenes to enhance the legitimacy of the existing social and political order by proposing incremental reforms. Central aspects of GCI's behavior also reflect and reinforce the dominance of state and corporate interests. For example, its human rights argument equating the right to “water for life” with that of “productive water” constitutes an effort to defend the *status quo* against more radical and transformative interpretations of the human right to water. This support for the *status quo* is also manifest in GCI's regulatory proposals, which call for increases in private sector investments. Of the three cases, only the COC's enduring support for enshrining the human right to water in national and international law offered an unambiguous example of a counterhegemonic organization. In this instance, critical

theory offered a satisfactory explanation for the COC's behavior, which, critics would argue, likely emanates from the COC's refusal to accept state or corporate contributions.

For all these insights, critical theory perspectives nevertheless contain two critical shortcomings. First, the singular focus on cultural diversity only problematically extends to concerns about the non-human world. For critical theorists, such considerations extend only to the limits of environmental justice, which focuses attention on the distribution of environmental goods and harms. Because both TNC and GCI explicitly recognize the *intrinsic* value of nature, their ethical circle includes considerations of ecological justice, which rests on the proposition that a thing is good or right not simply because it results in the equitable distribution of goods and harms among people, but rather because it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community (Leopold 1989). Critical theorists tend to dismiss the ecocentric perspective, warning that at best it fails to “make meaningful discriminations within the [human-animal] continuum” (Low and Gleeson 1998, 140) and at worst prompts a slippery slope to ecofascism (Ferry 1995; Zimmerman 2005).

There is little need here to wade into this particular philosophical debate. Rather, it is sufficient to show that a shortcoming of the critical approach is its insistence on evaluating GCS according to the normative standards established by critical theory. To make this move is to commit the fallacy of overlooking alternatives, which is to forget that things may happen for a variety of reasons. For instance, cultural diversity may be as much a cause as a consequence of environmental injustice. For instance, in their research into the limits to adaptation to climate change, Adger, et al. (2009, 349) argue, “adaptation to climate change is limited by the values, perceptions, processes and power

structures within society.” In contrast to the assertions of critical theorists, their findings show that certain cultural values can prevent people from taking the steps necessary to prepare for dramatic climatic changes, including shifts in precipitation and flow regimes. Thus, the critical project of preserving the diversity of cultural understandings and values may have the unintended effect of exacerbating existing environmental injustices. If this is true, then the ecological work carried out by TNC – work that is frequently supported by states and corporations - may actually offer a more humane and viable alternative to the kind of grim dystopian forecasts of Adger and his colleagues. This suggests that the causes of environmental injustice may have more to do with the endogenous variables that prevent people from identifying and successfully adapting to climactic changes than the political strategies of groups like TNC and GCI.

The second shortcoming of the critical perspective is that it struggles to account for incremental changes in the structural configuration of world politics. Critical theory would likely interpret TNC’s payment for ecosystem services initiative as a reflection of state and corporate interests. However, because this initiative is non-profit, it does offer one subtle yet significant adjustment to the for-profit *status quo*. Nevertheless, even this step is likely to fall well short of critical theorists’ demands for more radical solutions, like those that are consistent with the precautionary principle. This principle places the burden of proof on developers and other agents to demonstrate that their plans and activities do not pose any serious risks of environmental harm (Stevis 2002).

This radical position means that critical theorists would also view support for commodity pricing as additional evidence that GCS functions to support the status quo. GCI perceives pricing strategies as an effective means of conveying information about

resource scarcity and resource quality, thereby allowing individuals and groups to make more informed decisions about the costs associated with their resource use. Both TNC and GCI advocate a full-cost pricing regime, which means that the price of water should express the social, political and environmental externalities associated with water resource allocation and provision. Although such adjustments might be painful, if done correctly they could be effective in stimulating greater political pressure to resolve the underlying causes of resource scarcity, and thus incrementally induce significant and widespread political, social and environmental reforms. Nevertheless, the emphasis placed on counterhegemonic sources of potential radical transformation blinds the critical approach to the positive potential of these types of incremental structural reforms.

In sum, GCS is not the most powerful feature in world politics, nor is it completely autonomous, but we can now tentatively characterize its emergence as an axiological break in the history of world politics. That is, the rise of GCS signals the “centralized construction of norms and far reaching production of legitimacy, spread out over world space” (Negri and Hardt 2001, 13). This dynamic is evident in the support for liberalization by GCI and TNC. Critical theory perspectives also correctly diagnose the rise of resistance to these developments within GCS, the aim of which is to check and direct the progressive process of capital accumulation. Critical theorists do not entirely discredit the emancipatory potential of GCS, but argue instead that GCS functions “as a site of both inequality and movements to redress inequality, of seemingly incommensurable identities and values and the negotiation of commonalities, of imposition and domination and the possibility of conversation and democracy” (Pasha and Blaney 1998, 444).

Conclusion

What implications if any do the findings of this dissertation offer for our understanding of the theoretical debates about GCS? In other words, where do we go from here? This dissertation suggests that there are only limited benefits to be gained by studying GCS as a totality. The degree of variability within GCS is simply too great to make this enterprise worthwhile. On the other hand, this finding may prove beneficial for guiding theoretical and empirical studies of the actors that make up GCS. It suggests, for example, that as researchers we ought to evaluate these actors on their own terms. At a minimum, this means that pragmatists would benefit from revisiting their conceptions of power and influence, by grounding their analyses on the actor's preferences, perceptions and values, and by incorporating extra-institutional activities, like ecological work. The case study methodology employed in this dissertation may prove useful for guiding this expanded research agenda. In addition, while these findings also confirm the expectations of the critical theorists perspective they do not do so unequivocally. For example, critical theory perspectives could benefit from incorporating the needs of nature into their conceptions of justice. This is not to suggest that critical theorists are wrong to stress the importance of maintaining diverse cultural understandings and values; rather, it is only to suggest that other considerations, such as the need to maintain ecosystem integrity, are also worthy of consideration.

In the final analysis, it is the complexity and diversity of GCS that makes this constellation of actors so difficult to clearly define. In other words, GCS is not one thing but many. This complexity in turn contributes to the complexity and diversity of world politics, at once shaking up the established order of things even as the struggles for power that are inherent to its internal dynamics seemingly undermine its ability to effectively

address the global problems it set out to solve. Just imagine what might be accomplished if these actors could instead set aside their petty differences and join forces to solve a common concern, like freshwater governance. The Nature Conservancy, the Council of Canadians, and Green Cross International, each focused on its particular area of expertise, working in concert to solve the multiple dimensions of a water resource problem. Until the actors who make up GCS can learn to embrace their differences, it seems GCS will sadly fail to live up to its potential as possibly the one last hope for addressing our mounting global political problems.

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