

International Sociology

<http://iss.sagepub.com>

Environmental Movements in the Global South: Issues of Livelihood and Beyond

Ranjit Dwivedi

International Sociology 2001; 16; 11
DOI: 10.1177/0268580901016001003

The online version of this article can be found at:
<http://iss.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/16/1/11>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:



International Sociological Association

Additional services and information for *International Sociology* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://iss.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://iss.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav>

Citations (this article cites 7 articles hosted on the SAGE Journals Online and HighWire Press platforms):
<http://iss.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/16/1/11>

Environmental Movements in the Global South

Issues of Livelihood and Beyond

Ranjit Dwivedi

Institute of Social Studies, The Hague

abstract: This article looks at the struggles and actions over environmental issues in the context of the developing world. Drawing on some well-known cases across three continents, Asia, Africa and Latin America, the article looks at the strengths and weaknesses of the 'livelihood approach' that seems to dominate the analysis of environmental movements. It is argued that while the livelihood approach may be appropriate to explain resource conflicts, the study of movements requires attention on political variables: actors, stakes and practices, and so forth. The article therefore calls for a forceful integration of collective action and social movement theories with livelihood approaches to better understand environmental movements.

keywords: environment ♦ livelihood ♦ movement ♦
north-south ♦ struggles

Introduction

The burgeoning of environmental movements has been a major political development in the global South in the closing decades of the 20th century. Their politics and practices have increasingly impacted policy and political agendas of states and governments. Their rise to prominence has heralded a new consciousness around environmental issues, hitherto deemed insignificant, if not downright irrelevant in mainstream policy-making. More significantly, the growth of these movements has taken place at a time of unprecedented changes in power equations among states, markets and civil societies. With policy agendas of southern states and governments structurally redefined in the processes of liberalization,

International Sociology ♦ March 2001 ♦ Vol 16(1): 11–31
SAGE (London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi)
[0268-5809(200103)16:1;11–31;016280]

privatization and globalization, collective actions around environmental issues gain additional significance as mechanisms of challenge and negotiation taking roots in the civil society.

Parallel to the political prominence of environmental movements is their marked pluriformity in practices. Contemporary environmental movements are characterized by diverse actions, actors and issues. The different political and institutional contexts in which they operate and their varied political orientations augment their diverse practices. The going gets complicated further when actions deemed environmental cross-cut parallel forms of collective actions in the field of ethnicity, gender, regional autonomy, labour and human rights.

The term 'environment' implies anything from 'microbial action of organisms to world population' (Humphrey and Buttel, 1995: 2). Environment is a fluid concept that is socially contested and contingent and has been represented in multiple ways ranging from the scientific-rational to the religious-mystic. Contemporary discussions on environment emphasize few critical areas: quality of atmosphere, water quality, loss of soil productivity, loss of genetic diversity, deforestation, toxic contamination, hazardous material, depletion of indigenous and dependence on imported resources (Sklair, 1994: 207). Humphrey and Buttel (1995: 3) include air and water quality, food supply, fuel and forest reserves and the availability of other scarce natural resources. To them, environment is 'the physical and material bases of all life, including land, air, water as well as the vital material and energy resources in the surroundings of a society'. Collective actions around the environment signal conflicts and crises in the material and physical bases of life. They may be defined as public, political actions of protest, resistance and reconstruction around environmental alteration, degradation and destruction.

In environmental thought, just a cursory look at popular concepts – ecosocialism, ecofeminism, political ecology, deep ecology, sustainable development, alternative development and so on – reveals the diverse ideologies, analytics and approaches to environmental crises, conflicts and actions. Each approach in turn serves normative, strategic and/or empirical purposes causing subtle changes to the conceptions and meanings of environmental collective actions.

In conceptual terms, environment movement is best understood as an 'envelope', as it encompasses a variety of socially and discursively constructed ideologies and actions, theories and practices. This article 'unpacks the envelope' to outline a broad critique of the livelihood approach to environmental struggles in the global South. In the process, it specifically attempts to assess the emerging trends therein that seem to have been somewhat neglected in the relevant literature. To that end, the

article draws upon political ecology/political economy of resource use literature and a parallel body of analytics in social movement literature and development studies.

Approaching Environment Movements in the North

The literature on the emergence of environmental movements in the North is rather extensive. Particularly in Europe, studies dwell on the structural conditions in the 1970s that generated environmental mobilization. The economic affluence in the postwar North had by and large resolved the quantitative aspects of distribution. It was the qualitative aspects exemplified in environmental conditions and quality of life that caused concerns for pollution, industrial waste and urban decay, the 'effluents of affluence' (Guha and Martinez-Alier, 1997: 31). They became new sites of politics while wilderness areas and clean air became new symbols of healthy society and living (Nash, 1982). Environmental mobilization thus came to be conceptualized as a form of 'post-material' politics distinct from the materialist politics of the 'left-red' labour and trade union platforms. Studies in Europe (and elsewhere) have shown that the core members in the mobilization belong mostly to the middle class living in material conditions that facilitate their relative neglect of material, economic and redistributive demands (Offe, 1985; Eder, 1995). At stake are issues beyond class and structures of privilege, cultural values and other symbolic aspects. The emergence of this post-material politics has led some scholars to characterize environmentalism as a full stomach phenomenon and green politics as the ultimate luxury of consumer society (see Moore, 1989).

In Europe, the environmental movement became the exemplar of the 'new social movement' (NSM) analytic (Cohen, 1985). The 'newness' was in direct contrast to the 'old' class-based politics of the labour movement. NSMs were new responses to new grievances. The emergence of new societal cleavages and conflicts around issues of identity, values and solidarity could no longer be encapsulated within the overarching political economic conflicts in the production process. In fact, not only were new social movements different from the old, they were endowed with the necessary agency to fuel macro-level societal transformation replacing class as historical actors (Touraine, 1985; Offe, 1985). As markers of their times of post/high/late/advanced modernity, NSMs symbolized shifting objectives from those centred predominantly on economic interests to those based on cultural identities and orientations (Melucci, 1989). In the NSM analytic, environmental movements emerge from the caustic chaos of industrial society in which nature and environment undergo

radical and often unintended but permanent transformation having far-reaching socioecological consequences (Giddens, 1990; Beck, 1995). As new political forces they express a generalized desire for community, self-realization and personal satisfaction and propagate alternative cultural codes, in particular lifestyles while resisting and potentially altering the representation of nature as resources for economic exploitation and progress.

On the other side of the Atlantic, a movement's organizational dimensions rather than its transformation potential has been regarded as its dominant analytic. The focus shifts from the structural preconditions that foster new movements to the problems of mobilization, organization and strategic decision-making. Movement analysis is rife with terminology such as social movement *organization*, social movement *sector* and social movement *industry* as an indication of the interest in the resource mobilization aspects of social movements. The latter has a more expressed focus on the movement's politics based as it is on the premise that while social discontent can be universal, collective action is not. Thus whereas the NSM analytic stresses on *why* (new) social actors emerge, the resource mobilization theory stresses on *how* they mobilize. Applied to environmental mobilization, the resource mobilization approach conceptualizes it as a conglomerate of rationally organized sets of practices. It is a useful analytic to analyse micro-level operations of environmental organizations and bureaucratic networks such as UNEP (United Nations Environmental Programme), Greenpeace, Sierra Club, IUCN (World Conservation Union), WWF (WorldWide Fund for Nature) and Friends of the Earth, the mobilization of resources at different levels, issues of leadership and decision-making, strategic interests and protest events, competition between them for resources. Environmental movement in this perspective is how organizations and networks do what they do.

Contemporary scholarship on environmental movements has highlighted several limitations in these analytics and has advanced theory building in several interesting directions. For instance, the grand theory orientation of the NSM approach has been criticized for assuming collective actions to follow from new forms of structural domination; it also tends to valorize their transformation potential. Likewise, the resource mobilization approach reduces environmental mobilization to an aggregate of people organizing resources to fight for their interests. Perhaps most importantly, contemporary scholarship has drawn attention to a genre of environmental collective actions emerging in the Third World that is qualitatively different from the causes and concerns expressed in First World movements (see Bryant, 1992; Peet and Watts, 1996; Friedmann and Rangan, 1993).

Environmental Movements in the South: The Livelihood Approach

Scholarship on environmental movements in the Third World has viewed them as essentially actions by the marginalized poor to protect their environmental means of livelihood and sustenance. Environmental resources such as land, water and forests constitute the material basis of the production and reproduction of the economic poor. Actions in defence of such resources amid growing encroachment and degradation by the richer and better-off sections of the society are what distinguish Third World environmentalism from that in the First World. In the South, approaches to environmental movements share the disenchantment with their European counterparts regarding the veracity of 'left-right conflict' as *the* central analytic and class politics as the appropriate and ultimate public action. Although environmental movements are seen as emerging outside the purview of class politics, environmental conflict is theorized in class terms between the rich and the poor.

The differences in the movements across North and South have been highlighted by a number of scholars. According to Redclift (1987: 159):

The two principal components of environmental movements in the South are of marginal importance to most movements in the developed countries. They are that those who constitute the movement are engaged in a livelihood struggle and secondly that they recognize that this livelihood struggle can be successful only if the environment is managed in a sustainable way.

Redclift's formulation finds echo in subsequent works. From what is predominantly a political economy approach to resource struggles, scholars attribute the rise and growth of environmental movements in the South to the predatory exploitation of natural resources that feeds the process of development in postcolonial societies, the non-local (i.e. national and global) production relations governing natural resource use and transformation and the inequality in resource distribution (see Shiva and Bandyopadhyay, 1989). To them, environmental struggles for the most part are between those who have benefited from economic development and those who bear its costs. Shiva (1991: 19) locates the Indian environment movement as a response to the resource and energy-intensive 'development project' of the country's economic elite:

The resource demand of development has led to the narrowing of the natural resource base for the survival of the economically poor and powerless either by direct transfer of resources away from basic needs or by destruction of the essential ecological process that ensure the renewability of the life-supporting natural resources. In the light of this background ecology movements emerged as the people's response to this new threat to their survival and as a demand for the ecological conservation of vital life-supporting systems.

The main sites of environmental conflicts and movements in the South are energy and resource-intensive activities and projects such as big dams, commercial forestry, mining, energy-intensive agriculture and mechanized fisheries – projects and activities that threaten and erode the resource base of peasants and other artisan groups. The material as opposed to the symbolic form of expression of southern movements is rooted in the political economy of the South distinctly different from the ‘postindustrial’ North. Here political expressions of different orientations including environmental ones are (still) conditioned by industry–peasant conflicts. As Gadgil and Guha (1995) remark, in the developing world:

... environmentalism has its origins in conflicts between competing groups – typically peasants and industry – over productive resources ... [as] the intensification of resource use undermines existing but subsistence oriented economic activities. ... [Here] environmental conflict is for the most part, only another form of economic conflict.

Unlike the North, the conflicts are not so much over how the environment should be used but over who should use and benefit from it (Gadgil and Guha, 1995). As Martinez-Alier has noted, in the southern environmental movements the epithet ‘environmental’ is relevant ‘insofar as they express objectives in terms of ecological requirements for life’ (cited in Peet and Watts, 1996: 3). Thus one can argue that it is not as much lifestyles as life chances that constitute the battleground of environmental politics in the South.

The distinctiveness in approach between the South and the North veers around the preference for a political economy approach to resource distribution and use in the former as opposed to either an organizational or NSM approach in the North. In the case of the southern movements, equity issues feature as importantly as sustainability and efficiency. The stated differences in approaches nonetheless do not obliterate an observable commonality. Like their European counterparts, southern environmental movements have been subjected to a predominantly systemic analysis. Environmental movements both in the North and the South tend to be considered as responses to systemic contradictions. Whether pursuing post-material values or material requirements of life, they are endowed with a generalized radicalism that is directed at the system as a whole. The explanatory domain seems to overarchingly focus on macro-level structural contradictions and crises. While movements emanate from systemic contradiction, the latter do not automatically produce organized resistance. It would therefore be pertinent to argue that in structural approaches whereas conflict is theorized, the responses are not. Thus they remain appropriate to analyse conflicts rather than movements. In the

specific context of the Third World, the mediation between structural contradictions, deprivations and various forms of sociopolitical actions is crucial in order to gain a fuller understanding of the politics and practices of environmental movements (Peet and Watts, 1996).

Environmental Movements in the South: Actors, Practices and Issues

As has been indicated earlier, one needs to be careful in attributing causal connections between socioeconomic factors that are deemed to generate environmental movements and their practices. Rather than celebrating a generalized transformation potential of environmental movements the task at hand seems to account for the diversity and contextual specificity of environmental movements. To us a way forward is to map the range of issues, actors and practices that constitute the diversity in these movements. In recognizing first the diversity in forms and practices, such mapping could better anticipate emerging trends in them.

The mapping attempted in the tables which follow is in two stages. Its overall purpose is limited to highlighting issues, actors and actions in movements broadly deemed environmental in the Third World context.

Stage one (see Table 1) plots a few well-known cross-continental empirical cases of popular 'environmental' mobilizations in the South to show a variety of issues and actions that have featured in the politics of these movements. Stage two (see Table 2) offers a more complex mapping that attempts to capture the various dimensions in environmental mobilization and attempts to match the diversity in themes and stakes with actors and practices.

The seven cases mentioned in Table 1 are popular environmental movements and between them cover issues such as deforestation, water quality, depletion of indigenous resources, human resettlement and threat to public health, toxic contamination and atmospheric pollution. Whether threatened by development projects and activities or by measures of environmental protection as in the case of the Zapatista rebellion, these mobilizations denote struggles for protecting environmental conditions of livelihoods and sustenance of directly affected local communities. Yet as the mapping indicates, environmental mobilization involves actors other than local communities and actions other than those geared towards defensive pursuits of livelihood. Instead of limiting Third World environmental mobilization into one centred around livelihood issues, one needs to perceive environmental movements in their multidimensionality, inclusive of a broader corpus of actors, themes, stakes and practices. Table 2 attempts to show the different dimensions of Third World environmental movements.

Table 1 *Environmental Movements in the South: Popular Cases*

Movements	Issues	Actions	Actors	Ideals
Chipko Movement (India)	Deforestation and commercial logging in the Himalayan foothills; local people's rights to resources.	Hugging of trees; Satyagraha; eco-restoration; local projects for resource harvesting; national and international lobbying.	Local communities; women; local activists and organizations.	Gandhian; Marxist; local resource control and management.
Chico Dam Movement (Philippines)	Eviction due to the construction of the dam; right to ancestral domain and cultural integrity; self-government.	Militant and armed resistance followed by a phase of peaceful protest.	Local Igorot people; Catholic church; new people's army; national environmental groups.	Marxist; cultural and political rights.
Rubber Tappers Movement (Brazil)	Evictions due to land speculation from ranchers; demands for extractive reserves.	Peaceful protest through <i>empates</i> (stand-offs); alliance building.	Rubber tappers union; North American environmental groups; local Indian peasants; Brazilian workers party.	Local resource management.
Zapatista Rebellion (Mexico)	Displacement due to proposed 'bio-reserve'; forest conservation; abolition of legal rights of Indian settlers.	Violent uprising followed by extensive national and international campaign.	Local population in Chiapas and Oxaca; international action groups and networks.	Political reforms; Indian rights to resources.
Ogoni Movement (Nigeria)	Oil operations by MNCs such as Shell and Chevron; threats to livelihoods through pollution and contamination of land and water.	From peaceful demonstrations to a separatist movement.	Ogoni people's organizations and action groups; Greenpeace and other international NGOs.	Resist oil exploration; better environmental management; sharing of benefits.
Green Belt Movement (Kenya)	Desertification; local needs of women; denotification of 'green-belts'; democratization and governance.	Planting trees; protest actions and advocacy work; networking with other environmental groups in Africa.	National Council for Women; UNDP; Novib; Danish Children project.	Human rights; women's rights.
Narmada Movement (India)	Displacement; environmental impact; right to information and participation of local communities.	Peaceful protests at the local and national levels; public litigation; extensive lobbying and campaign at the international level.	Affected people; local, national and international NGOs, human rights groups, environmentalists and engineers.	Sustainable and equitable development; local resource harvesting and management.

Source: Guha (1989); Hilhorst (1997); Osaghae (1995); Hecht and Cockburn (1989); Ndegwa (1996); Castells (1997); Dwivedi (1998).

Notwithstanding the limited purpose and base of the mapping in Table 1, it hints at the themes and actors in the movements, the diverse ideals and degrees of radicalism and the politics of transcending localities to form national and transnational links. The mapping offered in Table 2 expands on these aspects. It classifies the multiple dimensions, themes and actions that feature or are emerging in environmental movements (particularly though not exclusively in the South). These dimensions and their respective themes are not to be viewed hierarchically although the classification does imply varying degrees of environmental consciousness in different aspects of movements. Neither are the dimensions to be seen as mutually exclusive types of movements. In empirical terms, a particular movement at a given point in time can compositely reflect multidimensionality and hence a cluster of themes, practices and actors either fully or partially.

Viewed as a heuristic device, the mapping in Table 2 is helpful to identify and deliberate on aspects that fall outside the net of the 'livelihood' approaches to environmental movements in the South. Before we identify these aspects, we summarize four 'tendencies' discernible in existing studies on environmental movements. First, such studies tend to view environmental movements as local manifestations of nationally and globally generated resource conflicts. Second, they consider locally situated victims of environmental degradation and destruction to be the main actors in these movements. Third is their anti-'science' characterization of such movements, since science is characterized as a western, homogenizing, alienating and centralizing force underlying modernization and development (see Shiva, 1991). Fourth, they tend to associate with the ideals of these movements, 'new visions of development' based on new productive rationalities, environmental sensibility and cultural pluralism.

Set against the mapping in Table 2, these tendencies give only a limited and partial account of environmental movements. As the mapping suggests, the movements address a more complex bundle of issues than local resource conflicts. The struggles are played out over interests, knowledge, values and meanings in local as well as national and global arenas. In a similar vein, movement actors comprise not just 'affected poor' and their support groups but a variety of action groups spread from the local to the global and engaged in diverse practices and networks. The involvement and participation of different classes of actors suggest that environmental movements in the South (as in the North) straddle class borders rather than polarizing around them. The reliance on professionals, experts and the knowledge class in general also signifies their 'science-base' (see Buttel and Taylor, 1994; Castells, 1997). And finally, actions deemed environmental exude varied degrees of radicalism and consciousness. At one end of the spectrum, we have 'reactive' responses seeking political status of

Table 2 *Diversity in Environmental Movements: Multiple Dimensions*

Dimensions	Themes	Stakes	Actors	Practices
Reactive (defensive).	Political status of interest.	Gains and losses in resource alteration and distribution.	Local affected communities and groups.	Resistance against eviction and displacement; negotiations of compensation and liabilities.
Redefinition of property rights and usufruct.	Individual and common property resources; intellectual property rights; local control and management of resources.	Loss of livelihoods; local rights to resource use and benefits.	Local communities and groups such as artisans, peasants, forest and fisher folks, pastoral groups; local action and support groups.	Protest actions and resistance; restorative and cooperative practices for more sustainable and equitable management.
Redefinition of impact.	Risks, uncertainties and hazards; benefit claims.	Information; knowledge claims; public health; socioenvironmental impact of trade and investment, reforms, adjustment and globalization.	Affected groups and communities; knowledge and professional class; national and global networks.	Mobilization of counter-claims in knowledge; science-based risk politics around environment and social impact of projects, pollution and biodiversity losses, toxic dumping; demands for protective clauses, restorative policies.
Reformation of institutions.	Transparency and accountability in decision-making procedures and processes; norms and rules.	Duties and responsibilities of state and inter-state agencies and TNCs; citizens' rights; 'political closure' and democratization of institutions.	NGOs and action groups; knowledge class.	Public domain politics: public campaigns, lobbying and litigation; building civil society networks; demands for participation and accountability.
Radical (revivalistic and revolutionary).	Control of political economy; cultural and civilizational identity.	Political power and autonomy; right to autonomous and self-development cultural values and lifestyles.	Political action groups; indigenous people's movements; utopian groups.	Actions for decentralization and regional autonomy; ethnic, religious and identity-based actions for preservation of cultural and natural diversity; actions against consumer culture.

Source: Own research; influenced by social movement classification in Touraine (1985) and adaptations and insights provided in Castells (1997).

interests. Attributing a priori an environmental awareness to such mobilizations is untenable as being affected by one problem does not automatically engender a willingness to take collective action with respect to a range of issues. On the other end, we have a 'radical' set of responses where environmental concerns either feature as part of a larger set of political and cultural stakes or (less frequently) constitute alternative imaginaries as in deep ecology politics.

In our view, the multidimensionality accounted for in Table 2 contains two interrelated aspects that may be said to fall outside the net of livelihood approaches: (1) the local–global nexus and (2) the epistemic dimension of struggles. While each of these aspects require specific focus and understanding, they signal budding trends in collective actions around the environment. In other words, they are aspects potentially contributing to the future agenda of environmental movements in the South.

The Local–Global Nexus

In the analysis of environmental actions, locality is considered to be a significant cultural and environmental condition that is affected by larger political economic processes. Collective actions around environment are seen to unfold within the particularities of the local. We have argued earlier that this is a partial view of environmental movements that overlooks actions beyond the grassroots. A related concern is the conversion of the locality from a condition of action to an 'actor' and to an 'ideology' of resistance and reconstruction.

Meegan speaks of locality as actor *if* interests and identities are locally defined and *if* they act on the basis of locally situated organizations (cited in Friedmann and Rangan, 1993: 4). Such a formulation, with all its caveats, explains only the local dimension of environmental struggles. The interconnections at the national and global levels, with 'non-local' actors, structures and discourses, are left unaddressed. More often than not, actors at the national and global levels play critical roles in providing local actors with information and resources, protection and legitimacy (Brysk, 1994: 52). The involvement of global organizations such as Greenpeace in the Ogoni movement (Salih, 1998) and Oxfam, Survival International, Friends of the Earth and International Rivers Network in the Narmada movement (Udall, 1995; Dwivedi, 1998) has been multidimensional. From documenting adverse impacts, mobilizing global public opinion as well as resources, lobbying at the highest political level to directly participating in protest events, the activities of these organizations suggest the 'globalization of environmental protest'. An important aspect of this form of politics can be attributed to the communication revolution, particularly the spread of the Internet, through which information, strategies and action plans are

exchanged globally. It enables the activation of global networks to support or resist local events and developments. For instance, in the Narmada movement, there have been numerous occasions when 'action alerts' have been issued at the local level to a chain of national and global environmental and human rights organizations to stall or condemn forceful evictions of people in the valley.

The point we wish to stress is that the livelihood approach simply fails to adequately address these connections. In fact, the simultaneous conversion of locality into ideology causes it to reincarnate as localism. In much of the scholarly work on environmental movements, localism has served as a powerful ideal that propounds 'delinking' as a political strategy of actions directed against 'non-local' agents be it the state or the forces of globalization. To Castells (1997: 124):

Even in the most defensive expressions ... to assert the priority of local struggles over the use of a given space by 'outside interest', such as companies dumping toxics or airports extending their runways, bears the profound meaning of denying abstract priorities of technical and economic interests over actual experiences of actual uses by actual people.

While abstract priorities clothed in terms such as 'national good', 'public interest' or for that matter 'economic development' are implied environmental battlegrounds, the organization and production of their denial are more often than not an outcome of actors who transcend their locality. In other words, the local asserts itself when it is effectively *linked* with national, regional and global arenas. Insofar as localism as a theory and ideology ignores this dimension of environmental struggles, it ignores the multilevel and multidimensional expressions of environmental issues including locally based livelihood struggles. Its strategic agenda of 'delinking' remains at best an ambiguous political assertion of the local and at worst a narrowly conceived celebration of it.

Two arguments may be advanced in support of the local–global nexus. The first is derived from social movement theory. The state-of-the-art literature on movements views them not as actors but as networks, action-systems and cognitive space (Diani and Eyerman, 1992; Melucci, 1992; Eyerman and Jamison, 1991). Each of these modes of conceptualization incorporates the multidimensionality of actors and issues in social movements. Their application in the specific context of environmental movements underscores connection across issues and actors. Thus for example, the Narmada movement in India is at the same time a local response to displacement, a broader struggle over environmental and economic impact, a national struggle for resettlement policies and part of a global struggle against mega dam projects. In spatial terms, it spans the local and the global, geographically and cognitively. While the local is indeed

a significant link in the chain of networks, it is shaped by (and shapes) discourses and practices outside it. Rather than viewing such movements through the lens of localism, it appears more appropriate to view their local–global nexus with regard to stakes and practices.

The focus on the local–global nexus becomes more compelling given the interconnections between environmental issues and those pertaining to rights. The ‘livelihood approach’ in this aspect makes the first steps by connecting issues of environmental despoliation with rights of local people to use, control and manage their resources. Thus issues deemed environmental – diversity loss, deforestation, land and water degradation and displacement – are reincarnated as demands for rights to life and livelihood. The demands for democratic rights to information and participation and civil rights against forceful evictions and state repression also feature as a cornerstone of environmental activism. This cross-cutting is also discernible vis-a-vis other issues, gender, ethnicity and so forth, allowing for active networking and exchange between ecology groups and those committed to human rights, gender and indigenous communities, locally as well as globally. Establishing and exploring these connections allow us to observe not only how different issues are articulated at different levels in movement politics and practices but also how universalizing and globalizing discourses on rights and ecology impinge and impact local issues and dynamics.

A related argument is derived from critical globalism perspectives that have drawn attention to the profound impact of globalization in reshaping the local and the national (Giddens, 1990). Moving beyond the goals of local empowerment and national welfarism, these perspectives stress global reforms through collective actions and the strengthening of global civics to counter, tame or reverse the adverse impact of economic globalization. Not surprisingly, it is the globalized practices of social movements, including those around environment, that lend credence to these perspectives – partly, because environmental risks and hazards increasingly have assumed global dimensions where boundaries matter little; partly, because the local or, for that matter, the national realms are increasingly getting exposed to global dynamics. A movement like Chipko or Narmada can be celebrated for their ‘profound meaning’ of the local people asserting and empowering themselves. The more important aspect is whether the profundity is enhanced when issues such as commercial logging or development-induced displacement are challenged at multiple levels.

The critical gains of environmental movements towards combating, regulating or minimizing environmental risks and hazards reinforce the local–global nexus. Southern environmental movements have one foot in local-level mobilizations and the other in struggles over the politics of

environmental and social clauses in multilateral trade and investment bodies, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) or the Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs). The latter struggle is as profound in its meaning, if not more, compared to the defensive and reactive responses at the local level. In any case, the issues contested in the global struggles have local implications and concern local lives and livelihoods be it trade practices, operations of TNCs or toxic dumping. Considering the sharpening divisions between northern and southern movements on these and related issues such as labour standards, fair trade, biotechnology and intellectual property rights, one gets to acknowledge the rather contradictory nature of the local–global connections. On the one hand, southern environmental movements are increasingly globalizing their protest in social movement and non-governmental organization (NGO) networks so as to be more effective in preventing national and global interests from encroaching the local. Yet, at the same time they confront these very global ‘allies’ in setting the agenda for global environmental reforms. For instance, there is a visible divide between environmental movements in the North and South concerning the links between environmental standards and trade. Much to their chagrin, the unintended consequences of this politics sets southern movements against northern states, transnational corporations (TNCs) and NGOs in matters pertaining to trade and investment and brings them uncomfortably close to their respective (southern) states against whom they contest with regard to other environmental issues. Critical globalism points to both the potential for and challenges in global regulation of environmental risks and hazards. However, as an analytic it needs to be engaged rather than celebrated, very much like localism.

The Epistemic Dimension of Environmental Struggles

As stated earlier, one of the fundamental characteristics of southern movements has been their material basis. The materiality of environmental struggles does not discount its epistemic dimension, nor does it define it. Southern environmental mobilizations struggle as much over meanings and knowledge as over material resources. Only a few scholars reflect on this aspect (Guha, 1989; Moore, 1993). Those others who recognize this aspect commit themselves to a form of cultural determinism where the epistemic struggles get reduced to one between indigenous/local/traditional knowledge and Eurocentric/modern/scientific knowledge (see, for example, Shiva, 1991). The struggles over rationality are explained away as one between rationalities of peasants and planners (Beck, 1992). The strong flavour of localism in such formulation

aside, they make environmentalism in the South essentially anti-science in orientation.

Yet this to us is only a part of the story. To elevate a movement rhetoric to the status of an analytic has its limitations, two of which are mentioned here. The first pertains to the knowledge endowments and entitlements of local community groups. It is true that the knowledge of local communities has often been sidelined and eroded in so-called scientific discourses and practices be it concerning management of commons and forest resources, water harvesting and farming, fishing and pastoral practices. The realization today, thanks to bureaucratic failures and popular protests, has resulted in a reverse discourse exemplified in common slogans such as 'learning from the farmer' and 'putting people first'. But consider the following. What kind of knowledge is it when affected communities facing displacement from a dam walk with their own sets of dumpy-levels along with the government surveyors to cross-check the marking of elevation and submergence levels? Local? Indigenous? What kind of knowledge is it when sympathetic engineers join local communities to initiate drought prevention projects? Setting indigenous and scientific knowledge in a binary position lands us in a discursive cul-de-sac. Clearly the questions above point to the syncretic knowledge and idioms in protest and restorative actions of local communities. The way forward then is to take cognisance of knowledge claims and knowledge interests in environmental action beyond the purview of locality and materiality. As Beck (1992) persuasively argues, environmental activism is increasingly becoming 'reflexive'. It is generating consciousness and awareness of despoliation and risks. This reflexivity to Beck is not a negation of scientific rationality but a radicalization of it.

This brings us to a second limitation in binary and exclusionist projections of knowledge struggles which is more striking. It concerns the role of the professional 'knowledge' class in environmental movements. The multifaceted role of this class of actors constitutes an important dimension of contemporary environmentalism in the South. Given that *impacts* of and *risks* in development projects and economic activities are major contested sites, the expertise of the knowledge class becomes an important resource for movements, at times more crucial than mass support at the local level (see Dwivedi, 1998). Buttel and Taylor (1994: 233) underscore this aspect in their observation:

Modern environmentalism, where the rubber meets the road, is increasingly an arena characterized by the deployment of scientific and technical knowledge, often in combat with rival data and knowledge claims that are set forth by their industrial, governmental and quasi-governmental adversaries in an attempt to deconstruct and delegitimize claims.

The overarching significance of this aspect has led Giddens (1990), Castells (1997) and Beck (1995) to characterize environmentalism as a science-based movement. In a more nuanced reading of this aspect, we characterize it as *risk politics* of environmental movements (Dwivedi, 1998). Through risk politics, environmental movements question the trustworthiness of agencies and institutions that handle uncertainties, attach probabilities and calculate risks and liabilities. Risk politics exposes the fact that probabilistic assumptions often tend to become political assertions. To Giddens (1990) it is often the case that, to muster public acceptance of proposed interventions, official experts tend to fudge or conceal the true nature of risks or even the fact that there are risks at all. He considers the circumstance more harmful 'where the full extent of a particular set of dangers and the risks associated with them is not realized by the experts. For in this case what is in question is not only the limits of, or gaps in, expert knowledge but an inadequacy which compromises the very idea of expertise' (Giddens, 1990: 131). Through the deployment of experts and professionals environmental movements claim to unravel hidden and unknown dangers, uncertainties and risks and their distributional implications.

Whether in conflicts around dams, terminator genes or nuclear technology, impact and risk assessments manifest as a major dimension in contemporary environmental movements. Thus whereas environmental movement rhetoric (in its hard form) can convey a populist language that is anti-science, anti-technology in tenor, their cognitive practices appear to be very much within a scientized domain. Recognizing this dimension of knowledge struggle and the scientific basis of it takes us beyond its popular conception as 'indigenous' or 'civilizational'. This 'discourse-against' (and its flip side, the preservation of indigenous culture) surely highlights the semiotic and value incompatibility aspects in southern environmental movements but exudes a strong oriental flavour that can be neutralized by approaching movements in terms of their multiple cognitive practices.

The role of the knowledge class in contemporary environmental politics in the global South is not without its associated tension and dilemmas. One aspect of this tension is evident between the interests of those who directly experience environmental despoliation and bear the burden of risk distribution and the knowledge class, who help to represent these interests in the political terrain. The potential tension between the two sets of actors is a major problem area as environmental struggles increasingly pervade a scientized domain. Such instances lead movements to value experts and professionals as more important resources than say locally affected people on whose behalf the struggle is being waged. In such practices, it is the local links of environmental movements that can

get slackened. Thus, risk politics of environmental movements is not without 'unintended consequences'. It potentially vests too much power and resources with the knowledge class and could well nullify the avowed goals of local empowerment and participation pursued by southern environmental movements.

Assessing Prospects

The implications of the two aspects considered in the previous section for a fuller understanding of environmental movements in the South appear substantive. In the first instance, the two themes take us beyond the 'livelihood' discourse that has so far constituted Third World environmentalism. Rather than restricting the meaning and agency of environmental action to struggles over livelihood and survival, the plea here is to adopt a more inclusive approach to Third World environmentalism that recognizes multiple agencies and practices. Second, these aspects suggest that southern environmental movements need not be conceptualized as formations that envision 'alternative development' at the local level, whatever the contour of the latter may be. Rather, both the local-global nexus and power-knowledge nexus are pointers to an attempt at democratic renewal at different levels of seeking an ecologically responsible society. The politics of environmental risks and hazards that environmental movements currently engage in do not pertain simply to risks to livelihoods but in fact cover a wider spectrum of uncertainties and risks. In that context demands for transparency, information sharing and participation in decision-making have become critical axes of environmental politics. Accountability rather than alternatives seem to be the defining feature of environmental movements. To that extent, the increasing globalization of environmental protest can be seen as an effective response to counter the current global hegemonies of the TNC-World Bank-IMF-WTO complex and to make these institutions accountable for their deeds and misdeeds.

In our assessment of the prospects of southern environmental movements we consider the local-global nexus and the knowledge-power nexus as key elements that will influence practices and thinking in environmental politics in the coming decades. Considering these as trends in environmental movement politics, we anticipate three likely developments on the basis of supportive evidence.

First, a sharpening of resource struggles and conflicts at local level as a result of increasing market- and state-led drives for resource 'development'. This will result largely from the resource demands and impact of economic globalization in large parts of the South. While not all struggle sites will generate full-fledged movements, the intensification of resource

conflicts around issues of land and forest rights and access to water and shelter will be central to the agenda of environmental movements.

Second, as the struggles sharpen, it is likely that market and policy actors will show increasing proclivity to negotiate and accommodate environmental concerns. While this argument may seem overtly optimistic, there is some evidence of rethinking among the major players in investment decision-making. On the one hand, organizations such as OECD and the World Bank have substantially refined their policies on lending, resettlement and environment (OECD, 1991; World Bank, 1994). On the other hand, one sees the emergence of new institutional arrangements like the World Commission on Dams (WCD) where market and policy actors (major hydropower companies and state representatives) and movement actors sit together to negotiate acceptable frameworks and standards for water resource investment and development (WCD, 1997). The pressures on policy and actors to accommodate environmental concerns could result in better institutions for risk and impact assessments, mitigation and compensation.

Along with institutionalization, a certain degree of professionalization of environmental issues and concerns is to be expected. Here we note the growing significance of the professional knowledge class in the global South in influencing both environment politics and policies, notwithstanding the power dynamics that this politics entails vis-a-vis local interests. Already, the all-round presence of the knowledge class can be seen in grassroots activism, local community organizations, policy-level lobbying and global networks. It is through the mediation of this class that environmental concern of a wider citizenry (than those at risk of livelihood losses) over such issues as air, water and noise pollution, public goods supply, health issues and provisions and rights to information and participation could get articulated. Together with rural livelihood issues, they could constitute the basis of environmental activism in the coming decades.

Third is the enmeshing of environmental groups with other civil society actors and movements in the sphere of human rights, gender, ethnicity and cultures. While there has been noticeable cross-cutting in these areas as far as grassroots activism is concerned, the future trend is likely to be one where similarities in practices and politics will blur differences in approaches. Already the cross-cutting has yielded platforms like the environmental justice movement, which combines environmental concerns from a human rights perspective. The political/economic/ecological diversities in the different regions of the global South will obviously result in different recombinations. Yet, the recombination holds promise for a democratic renewal in the global South to make the development experience therein sustainable, participatory and above all accountable.

Note

This is a substantially revised version of a paper presented at the 14th World Sociology Congress held at Montreal in 1998. The author would like to thank the ISS state-society staff group for generous support to participate in the congress and to Jan Nederveen Pieterse, P. K. Vijayan, Karen Gabriel and Sharada Srinivasan for comments on the article.

References

- Beck, U. (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi: Sage.
- Beck, U. (1995) *Ecological Politics in an Age of Risk*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bryant, R. (1992) 'Political Ecology: An Emerging Research Agenda in Third-World Studies', *Political Geography* 11(1): 12–36.
- Brysk, A. (1994) *The Politics of Human Rights in Argentina: Protest, Change and Democratization*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Buttel, F. and Taylor, P. (1994) 'Environmental Sociology and Global Environmental Change: A Critical Assessment', in Michael Redclift and Ted Benton (eds) *Social Theory and the Global Environment*, pp. 228–55. London and New York: Routledge.
- Castells, M. (1997) 'The Power of Identity', in *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, Vol. II. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Cohen, J. L. (1985) 'Strategy and Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements', *Social Research* 52(4): 663–716.
- Diani, M. and Eyerman, Ron, eds (1992) *Studying Collective Action*. London: Sage.
- Dwivedi, R. (1998) 'Resisting Dams and "Development": Contemporary Significance of the Campaign against the Narmada Projects in India', *European Journal of Development Research* 10(2): 135–83.
- Eder, C. (1995) 'Does Social Class Matter in the Study of Social Movements?: A Theory of Middle-class Radicalism', in L. Maheu (ed.) *Social Movements and Social Classes: The Future of Collective Action*, pp. 21–54. London: Sage.
- Eyerman, Ron and Jamison, Andrew (1991) *Social Movements: A Cognitive Approach*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Friedmann, J. and Rangan, H., eds (1993) *In Defence of Livelihood: Comparative Studies on Environmental Action*. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press.
- Gadgil, M. and Guha, R. (1995) *Ecology and Equity: The Use and Abuse of Nature in Contemporary India*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Giddens, A. (1990) *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Guha, R. (1989) *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Changes and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Guha, R. and Martinez-Alier, J. (1997) *Varieties of Environmentalism: Essays North and South*. London: Earthscan.
- Hecht, S. B. and Cockburn, A. (1989) *The Fate of the Forest: Developers, Defenders and Destroyers of the Amazon*. London: Verso.
- Hilhorst, D. (1997) 'Discourse Formation in Social Movements: Issues of Collective

- Action', in H. de Haan and N. Long (eds) *Images and Realities of Rural Life: Wageningen Perspectives on Rural Transformations*, pp. 121–52. Assen: Van Gorcum.
- Humphrey, C. R. and Buttell, F. H. (1995) 'Exploring Environmental Sociology', in M. Redclift and G. Woodgate (eds) *The Sociology of the Environment*, Vol. III, pp. 189–215. Aldershot: Edward Elgar.
- Melucci, A. (1989) *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society*, ed. J. Keane and P. Mier. London: Radius.
- Melucci, A. (1992) 'Frontier Land: Collective Action Between Action and Systems', in M. Diani and R. Eyerman (eds) *Studying Collective Action*, pp. 238–58. London: Sage.
- Moore, C. (1989) 'Foreword', in P. Marsden-Smedly (ed.) *Britain in the Eighties: The Spectator View of the Thatcher Decade*. London: Grafton.
- Moore, D. S. (1993) 'Contesting Terrain in Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands: Political Ecology, Ethnography and Peasant Resource Struggles', *Economic Geography* 69(4): 380–401.
- Nash, R. (1982) *Wilderness and the American Mind*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Ndegwa, S. N. (1996) *The Two Faces of Civil Society: NGOs and Politics in Africa*. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press.
- OECD (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development) (1991) *Guidelines for Aid Agencies on Involuntary Displacement and Resettlement in Development Projects*. Paris: OECD.
- Offe, C. (1985) 'New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics', *Social Research* 52(4): 817–68.
- Osaghae, E. E. (1995) 'The Ogoni Uprising: Oil Politics, Minority Agitation and the Future of the Nigerian State', *African Affairs* 94: 325–44.
- Peet, R. and Watts, M., eds (1996) *Liberation Ecologies: Environment, Development, Social Movements*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Redclift, M. (1987) *Sustainable Development: Exploring the Contradictions*. London: Methuen.
- Salih, M. (1998) *Environmental Politics and Liberation in Contemporary Africa*. Dordrecht, Boston, MA and London: Kluwer.
- Shiva, V. (1991) *Ecology and the Politics of Survival*. New Delhi: United Nations University/Sage.
- Shiva, V. and Bandyopadhyay, J. (1989) 'Political Economy of Ecology Movements', *IFDA Dossier* 71: 37–60.
- Sklair, L. (1994) 'Global Sociology and Global Environmental Change', in Michael Redclift and Ted Benton (eds) *Social Theory and the Global Environment*, pp. 205–27. London and New York: Routledge.
- Touraine, A. (1985) 'An Introduction to the Study of Social Movements', *Social Research* 52(4): 749–88.
- Udall, L. (1995) 'The International Narmada Campaign: A Case for Sustained Advocacy', in W.F. Fisher (ed.) *Towards Sustainable Development? Struggling over India's Narmada River*, pp. 201–30. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- WCD (World Commission on Dams) (1997) *Large Dams: Learning from the Past, Looking at the Future*, workshop proceedings. Gland: The World Bank and IUCN (World Conservation Union)/Cape Town: WCD.

World Bank (1994) *Resettlement and Development: The Bank-Wide Review of Projects Involving Involuntary Resettlement 1986–1993*. Washington, DC: The World Bank, Environment Department.

Biographical Note: Ranjit Dwivedi has a PhD from the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague and is currently engaged in post-doctoral research there.

Address: Institute of Social Studies, POB 29776, 2502 LT The Hague, The Netherlands. [email: dwivedi@iss.nl]