RECLAIMING THE LAND: THIRD WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS AND THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract
In recent decades, environmentalism has gained strength and importance in various arenas. The introduction of sustainable development brought the environment into mainstream development and economic thought. However, there continues to be environmental degradation around the world and poor and marginalised communities often bear the brunt of environmentally harmful production processes. A concurrent movement of environmentalism is that of environmental justice, which has been utilised and strengthened by locally-based environmental movements in the Third World. This article uses a political ecology perspective to examine the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) in Nigeria and highlights the broad range of issues involved in Third World environmental problems. The relevance of the environmental justice movement as a critique of sustainable development and the direction of the global environmental movement are explored through this case study.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE

Although today environmental issues permeate our everyday lives, it was not long ago that a resilient environment and plentiful natural resources were taken for granted. In many ways, it has been the rise of an environmental movement over the past several decades that has changed this view. Since its origins, the environmental movement has grown and evolved in many respects: from the actors involved, to its root causes and ultimate aims. Though concern for the environment has been present since the early stages of the industrial revolution, it only began to take its form as a social movement, and hence a growing force in mainstream thought, in the 1960s with such manifestations as the founding of World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in 1961 and the publishing of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962. The inception of the environmental movement was primarily a critique of "technocratic society" and of "the dominant values of consumer culture" (Jamison 2001:16). In this way,

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issues of pollution, environmental degradation and waste disposal made their way into the public sphere.

In the 1970s, the environment took the global stage in Stockholm at the United Nations' Conference on the Human Environment. The resulting declaration emphasized such issues as under-development and over-population as key contributors to environmental degradation, not just industrialization. It encouraged the careful use of natural resources and the implementation of scientific knowledge and technology toward improving the environment (UN 1972). Thus, the interdependence of the environment and development was established and environmental problems became an issue of international concern (Dovie 2002).

In 1973 the oil crisis struck and there was an additional focal shift in the movement to energy issues, especially to the controversial use of nuclear energy. This contributed to a greater politicisation of environmentalism. The emergence of green political parties, new environmental laws and the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the United States indicated a growing recognition of the problem of the environment in political circles (Jamison 2001).

With the 1980s came a diversification and a resulting diffusion of the movement. Environmental experts and activists became more specialized in their goals and strategies. In addition, the new push for neo-liberal policies and free market economics led to the reorientation of environmental issues from a social and political emphasis to that of an economic and commercial one (Ibid.). In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development published the Brundtland Report, *Our Common Future*. It was this publication that popularised the term "sustainable development" defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED 1987:8). With the increasing use of this concept, environmental policy became inextricably linked to economic growth.

As the 1990s arrived and progressed, fundamental changes were occurring in the environmental movement. This was evident at the United Nations' Conference on the Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The Rio conference, also called the Earth Summit, embraced the idea of sustainable development and set forth a global agenda of international governance and responsibility for the environment's welfare. Rio confirmed the position of the environment on the global political agenda and "helped establish environmental management as a duty of governments worldwide" (Sachs 2002:10). In addition, the Rio declaration emphasized the responsibility of businesses and corporations in improving environmental conditions and practices (UN 1992). This suggests an

increasing privatisation and decentralization of environmental policies, and the subsequent incorporation of ecology into a capitalist mode of production (Jamison 2001).

However, with the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) just two years later, it became clear that the priorities of governments worldwide did not lie with the environment but with corporate access to natural resources and a neo-liberal agenda. Sachs (2002) highlights three major impacts of neo-liberal globalisation: The expansion of economic growth to the South following the same unsustainable path as that in the already industrialized countries; open markets resulting in increased natural resource exploitation in the South; and the pressures of the world market leading to a prioritising of commercial interests of private actors over the protection of public goods. In other words, as the Third World struggles to develop and "catch up" to the industrialized North, they are prone to follow the same destructive path that allowed the North to reach its current state of development. Furthermore, as "green" policies are incorporated in the North, there has been a "geographical displacement of sources and sinks" (Martinez-Alier 2002:10) such that the environmentally harmful phases of production are shifted to the South. As a result, despite the apparent achievements at the Earth Summit, the trend has been increasing environmental degradation and no, or negative, economic growth in the South.

In 2002, representatives of government, business and civil society reconvened at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg. The aim was to look back on the agreements reached at the Rio Conference ten years previously and to reflect on and reassess the results, or lack thereof, of those accomplishments. The summit recognized that the high hopes and expectations coming out of Rio were not matched in practice and implementation in the years that followed. In fact, it was acknowledged that the levels of environmental degradation had not slowed and that poverty had in fact increased in many regions. The summit at Johannesburg, for this reason, did not focus on renegotiating the terms of the Rio agreements but rather on finding ways to more concretely implement and act on these agreements. Priorities, targets and timetables were set and many partnership initiatives were formed between governments, NGOs, intergovernmental organizations and the private sector. Poverty reduction and its link to success in sustainable development was a key factor at the summit. Other specific priority areas included water and sanitation, energy, health, agriculture and biodiversity. In addition, emphasis was placed on integrating sustainable development into systems of global economics, international trade and finance (UN 2002a).

The results of WSSD will be evaluated over the coming years. Participation and interest in the summit were high with 104 world leaders present and over 21,000 other participants including 9000 delegates, 8000 NGOs, and 4000 members of the press. The Plan of Implementation outlined the action plan to fight poverty and environmental degradation not only detailing what has to be done, but also who will do it. Furthermore, many monetary commitments were made by industrialized countries around the world to such areas as sustainable agriculture, biodiversity protection, water sanitation and energy initiatives (UN 2002b). Overall, implementation efforts will be largely carried out at the local, national and regional levels and primary responsibility for carrying out these plans will fall to the governments.

If nothing else, the Johannesburg summit demonstrated the importance and urgency of environmental issues around the world. It also indicated a growing interest of governments and the private sector in protecting the environment and its natural resources. However, whether this interest will outweigh that in economic growth at the cost of the environment remains to be seen.

While sustainable development has taken on a dominant position in the global environmental movement, continuing environmental problems have led to alternative discourses. For example, in recent years, there has been an additional current of environmentalism that has emphasized human rights. This environmental justice movement emerged from the recognition of inequality in access to resources and disproportionate effects of land degradation and pollution on poor and marginalized groups. The environmental justice movement originated within the civil rights movement in the United States in the 1960s, when poor and minority communities were subjected to environmental discrimination in such forms as pollution and unsafe working conditions (Bullard 2003). Since then, the causes of communities in the Third World have also been taken up. Environmental NGOs such as Greenpeace, Rainforest Action Network and Sierra Club have become increasingly involved in human rights campaigns and have helped to bring international attention to environmental justice issues around the world. With increasing capacity for communications and networking, local movements and international organizations continue to work toward internationalising their efforts (Clark 2002).

The environmental justice organizations have, in many ways, integrated into the larger environmental movement. According to Al Gedicks (as quoted in Clark 2002):

Until quite recently, native peoples have had to defend themselves against multi-national corporations and nation-states using their own very limited resources and with hardly any notice from the rest of the world. The situation has radically changed over the past decade. The integral connections between native survival and environmental protection have become apparent to even the most conservative environmental organizations (p. 434).

However, the origin and focus of the environmental justice movement are decidedly different from those of the more mainstream movement. The environmental justice movement originates from a struggle for rights and livelihood by those groups whose very survival depends on the health of their environment. Since these groups are usually marginalized and have little access to political and economic resources, their environments may be exploited by the state or transnational corporations (TNCs) without compensation to local communities. These groups mobilize to confront the state and a capitalist-driven society to regain control of their land and resources allowing their livelihoods and cultures to persist (Ibid.).

This is a very different perspective from that of the dominant global view of sustainable development. The Earth Summit exemplifies the incorporation of developmentalism into mainstream environmentalism. The answer to problems of poverty and resultant environmental degradation has been economic growth, but instead of solving problems, this strategy has resulted in social polarization and the dissolution of subsistence communities. While the early phases of the environmental movement recognized the impact of development on people and nature, as demonstrated by Rachel Carson, the recent trend has been an attempt to incorporate development into a seemingly contradictory rhetoric on the environment (Sachs 1995). What is left of this early environmentalism has grown out of a different foundation than the previous First World context. Now the emergence of a movement that questions the logic of sustainable development has arisen largely from those communities in the Third World that see a healthy environment as more critical to their survival than the often destructive economic growth strategies encouraged by the global development discourse.

The disparities between global efforts against environmental degradation and poverty and the reality of these issues around the world lead us to question the direction of the environmental movement. The purpose of this article is to try to better understand Third World environmental problems and how social movements have arisen from these problems to contribute to and take advantage of the environmental justice discourse. This understanding helps to determine how the global environmental movement can be better directed and suited to the Third

World experience. Political ecology is the guiding theoretical perspective utilized in this article. This holistic approach is well-suited to examining the complexities of environmental movements in the Third World and is described further below.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES IN POLITICAL ECOLOGY

As discussed above, there has been an emergence in recent decades of a global environmentalism that has taken on an economically-driven and development-oriented approach to curbing environmental decline and resource depletion. In contradiction to these aims, environmental degradation continues and we have seen an increasing marginalisation of those most negatively affected by resource exploitation and displacement of environmentally harmful phases of production. The resistance movements that arise in reaction to this process, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and other parts of the Third World, are an attempt by local communities to regain control and access to local resources and hence a means of livelihood and survival. These movements play a critical role in redefining discourse and redirecting the motivations and actions of organizations at various levels of the development project. In order to better understand the role of the Third World environmental movement in shaping this global discourse, the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People in Nigeria is taken as a case study, and its interaction with global discourses on the environment is examined. A political ecology perspective is used to understand the relationship between the various actors involved in the movement, including local populations, the Nigerian government and Shell Corporation.

Political ecology has been defined as "the study of social conflicts over the access to, and the destruction of, environmental resources and services" (Martinez-Alier 2002: 15). It is a recently evolved discipline that finds its roots in several schools of thought. The field grew out of a 1960s critique of neo-Malthusian thought and its claims of runaway population growth linked to environmental degradation. In linking human activities to environmental destruction and proposing political prescriptions to solve the crisis, the neo-Malthusians merged politics and ecology but were criticized for being overly grounded in "simple organic analogies" and lacking empirical data that demonstrated the crux of their thesis (Peet and Watts 1996:4). Blaikie and Brookfield's (1987) foundational text, *Land Degradation and Society*, contributed strength to the critique by highlighting the importance of marginality, pressure of production and the role of different perceptions of "environment" in the human-environment relationship.

In the 1970s, political ecology theory took on a more neo-Marxian perspective. Stemming from the fields of political economy and cultural ecology, scholars sought a more radical perspective and found this in the then popular Marxist school of thought. According to Bryant and Bailey (1997:13), "neo-Marxism offered a means to link local social oppression and environmental degradation to wider political and economic concerns relating to production questions". Critiques of neo-Marxism noted its overly structural and sometimes simplistic nature in which the role of local politics was minimized and the potentially important role of weak actors in resistance to strong actors like the state was downplayed. This led in the late 1980s to a more complex understanding of power relations in the human-environment interaction as discussed further below (Ibid.). In the 1990s, political ecology began to develop "more nuanced characterizations of the social and cultural identities that influence humans' roles in environment dynamics" (Paulson et al. 2003:208). This differed from earlier work that tended to view people as "land managers" and as objects of scrutiny that were more or less apolitical. Today, political ecology considers such cultural, social and political factors as gender, ethnicity, governance, and resistance as central issues to environmental knowledge and practice (Ibid.).

The various challenges and criticisms faced by political ecology during its development has paved the way for recent debates centred around the issue of politics as it relates to the environment (Ibid.). It is within the realm of political economy that the element of power relates socially to the interaction of humans with their environment. The concept of power is an important one in political ecology. Power is defined as the ability of an actor to control their own environment and the environment of others. Control in this sense may be exerted directly over access to resources or location of pollution and waste disposal sites. In addition, control may be exerted indirectly in the regulation of ideas that pertain to how the environment should be used and treated. Power plays an important role in Third World environmental movements such as that examined in this article. It is perceived and utilized differently by different actors: whereas strong actors use power as a tool to exploit resources and to minimize the costs of environmental degradation, weak actors use power for resistance and defence of livelihood (Bryant and Bailey 1997). As discussed below, MOSOP is a struggle for access to resources and control of the environment and involves multiple actors with different levels of political, economic and social power.

With its focus on power, political ecology tends to emphasize the social structure of such categories as class, ethnicity and gender. As seen with Bullard's work with inequality in environmental justice for example, these factors play an important role in environmental issues. However, political ecology has often been criticized for its

overly structural nature (Paulson et al. 2003; Bryant and Bailey 1997). Hence, the importance of such post-structural concepts as culture, values and ideas, as well as how these ideas are developed and understood, must also be examined (Escobar 1996). According to Paulson et al. (2003:206), an important aspect of political ecology is "the recognition of a plurality of positions, perceptions, interests, and rationalities in relation to the environment—an awareness that one person's profit may be another's toxic dump". It considers the various discourses and how actors use them to block or facilitate their own or other's interests.

Among the most notable research utilizing this aspect of political ecology is that on sustainable development and the inherent contradictions present in trying to reconcile economic growth with environmental protection (Bryant and Bailey 1997). It is this sustainable development discourse, as well as less dominant discourses such as environmental justice, that are the focus of this article. Escobar (1996:46) defines discourse as "the articulation of knowledge and power…the process through which social reality comes into being". It is clear that since the 1980s, sustainable development has become the dominant discourse in the global arena and has impacted the attitudes and actions of governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and businesses significantly.

The concept of sustainable development emerged out of a recognition of the global nature of the environmental crisis. It made the environment a matter of global responsibility and put it into a temporal perspective such that the focus was the needs of current and future generations. Sachs (1999), in his critique of the sustainable development "oxymoron", emphasizes that within this temporal perspective there is no distinguishing between the poor and the wealthy or the powerful from the powerless. In this way, the values and perspectives of certain actors become outweighed by the dominant view. Sustainable development has been used by the wealthy and powerful to justify the continuation of economic growth at the same levels that have resulted in the current environmental state of affairs. The less dominant discourse of environmental justice however, has emerged in recent years as an undercurrent in the environmental movement and is gaining strength through Third World social movements (Martinez-Alier 2002).

MOSOP (THE MOVEMENT FOR THE SURVIVAL OF THE OGONI PEOPLE): A CASE STUDY

The Ogoni people, with an estimated population of 500,000, inhabit the plains of the Niger Delta, in south-eastern Nigeria. The Niger Delta has supported large human populations for many decades and the area inhabited by the Ogoni, called

Ogoniland, is the most densely populated in Nigeria, and possibly Africa (Cayford 1996). The Ogoni are highly dependent on their environment for their livelihoods and make a living primarily on fishing and subsistence farming (Lee et al. 1997).

The Ogoni are an ethnic minority made up of six sub-groups speaking different dialects of the Ogoni language. The sub-groups tend to identify more strongly within themselves than between sub-groups and have no "myth of common origin" (Osaghae 1995:328). In fact, some groups have rejected a pan-Ogoni identity in the past. Despite this, the Ogoni have a long history of a pursuit of self-determination as a people. They were one of the last groups in the Niger Delta to be subdued by the British colonists and in 1945 they formed the Ogoni Central Union whose purpose was to create an Ogoni division distinct from the rest of the region. In the 1950s they struggled for a separate state of minority groups and this was achieved in 1967 with the formation of Rivers State which is the current political status of the area. This continuing struggle to unite the various sub-groups of Ogoniland has been a goal of the Ogoni political elites as they try to create a larger and more united ethnic group conferring a stronger political advantage (Ibid.).

In 1956, Nigeria's first commercially viable oil was discovered in the Niger Delta and the first oil wells were installed in Ogoniland in 1958. Currently, petroleum exports account for over 90% of Nigeria's foreign exchange and 80% of the government's revenue (Cayford 1996: 184). It is estimated that Ogoniland alone has produced over $30 billion worth of crude oil (Obi 2002: 15). However, due to political polarization and ethnic domination by majority groups, Ogoniland remains one of the poorest and most underdeveloped regions in Nigeria (Cayford 1996).

Oil production has had a strong impact on the Ogoni people, their intra-group relations, and their relations with others groups and the Nigerian state. The environmental degradation that Ogoniland has suffered as a result of oil production (discussed in more detail below) has given them more incentive to forge close ties as they address these common problems. As the group has become further marginalized from state power and has suffered continued social and economic underdevelopment despite the wealth produced by their land, they have found reason to come together to fight this common injustice (Osaghae 1995).

THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT

Nigeria was colonized by the British in the mid-19th century. Its arbitrary borders encompassed the majority ethnic groups of the Igbo, Yoruba, and the Hausa-Fulani peoples as well as many other ethnic minorities. After gaining independence in 1960, the government has undergone a succession of military and civilian regimes as well as a civil war in 1967 (Forrest 1995). Nigeria's economy consists primarily

of agriculture, petroleum, trade and manufacturing making up the bulk of the gross national product. Petroleum is its primary export commodity and the wealth attributed to this export is very unevenly distributed (Salih 1999).

During British colonization, the existing power structures were used to govern the various regions of the country resulting in the reinforcement of the power of the elites who then competed for positions of influence. There was a geographical power divide in which Northern Nigeria dominated the political and military structures and aimed to continue their control of the natural and economic resources of the south (Cayford 1996). After just a few years of civilian rule, the Nigerian military came to power in a military coup and ever since has been intimately involved in the politics of Nigeria and an important part of the political elite. Ibeanu (2000:7) points to "three props" on which the Nigerian "militariat" class balanced: the military dictatorship, the increase of ethnic and religious communalism which filled the gap left by the political parties, and the petroleum industry. A report issued by Human Rights Watch states:

> *While minority ethnic groups in Nigeria's multi-ethnic federation have successfully demanded that new states and local government units be carved out to fulfil their hopes of receiving some benefit from the oil money…the Nigerian federation has in practice, paradoxically, become ever more centralized and power and money has been concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer people. Politics has become and exercise in organized corruption; a corruption perhaps most spectacularly demonstrated around the oil industry* (HRW 1999).

Hence, the discovery of oil has had an important impact at the state level as well as the local level.

The government's political and economic dependence on oil further complicates the state's paradoxical role as both protector of the environment and developer of the economy. These responsibilities often directly contradict each other. In post-colonial times, Third World states like Nigeria focused on economic development with little consideration for the environment. Due to such things as economic necessity, national security or corruption, most states continue with policies that favour economic development at the environment's expense despite the worsening state of the environment and natural resource depletion. Moreover, the most powerful actors within the state structure have often gained their power position from control of resources, as demonstrated above, and are therefore unlikely to encourage or support a change from the status quo. The state uses its

political power over other actors to determine who will exploit and benefit from natural resources and how those resources will be used (Bryant and Bailey 1997).

SHELL CORPORATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Royal/Dutch Shell Group is one of the largest businesses in the world. The Nigerian subsidiary, the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), accounts for 14% of Shell's total world production and is its largest producer of oil outside of the United States (Lee et al. 1997). Although there are other oil multinationals operating in Nigeria, Shell is the largest operator in the Ogoni region. Shell's largest joint venture is with the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), a state owned oil company. This venture results in about one-half of Nigeria's crude oil production and has led to extensive operations in Ogoniland (Kretzmann 1995). Of the additional foreign companies operating in the country such as Chevron, Mobil, Elf and Texaco, only 5% of the total Nigerian labour force is employed in the oil industry (Lee et al. 1997). As stated above, Shell has been estimated to have extracted over $30 billion from Ogoniland alone. However, over the past 25 years, they are estimated to have spent only $200,000 on development programs in the region representing less than 0.5% of the total value of extracted Ogoni oil. The Nigerian government has received some compensation from the oil companies, meant for the victims of land and property damage, but often the money is not channelled to those communities. According to a Human Rights Watch report:

> *The multinational oil companies operating in Nigeria face a difficult political and economic environment…Successive governments have misspent the oil wealth which oil companies have helped to unlock…[and have] failed to fund its share of the joint ventures…and has played the different oil companies against each other…Acknowledging the difficult context of oil operations in Nigeria does not, however, absolve the oil companies from a share of responsibility* (HRW 1999).

Because of oil's extreme importance in the Nigerian economy over the years, the oil companies, in their joint ventures with the government, have many opportunities to influence the policies of the Nigerian state (Ibid.). Andrea Goodall of Greenpeace says "…Shell itself is the most powerful political actor on the Nigerian stage—both historically and currently…If Shell wanted to make a difference, they could" (Goodall in Kretzmann 1995). Nonetheless, throughout the extensive environmental degradation, extreme underdevelopment, and human rights abuses, Shell and other oil multinationals have continued their relations with the Nigerian government and their accruing of oil extraction revenues.

The damage to the environment as a result of oil production has been extensive. The poorly managed above-ground pipeline system has resulted in a large number of oil spills over the years (Kretzmann 1995). Besides crop and land damage, oil spills also result in pollution of drinking water and rivers and streams which are major sources of the Ogoni fishing livelihood. In addition to loss of livelihood, serious health problems can result from such pollution. Another cause of environmental damage is gas flares. Excess gas is burned in large fires which result in ecological damage in the area of the flares and physical damage to local resources. Soot is produced by the flares which are often located near villages. The soot is washed into water sources and soil when it rains causing additional pollution problems (Lee et al. 1997).

Shell and other multinationals have enjoyed the availability of cheap labour, natural resources, as well as the laxity of environmental laws and enforcement measures which tend to otherwise impinge on the power and wealth of the government at the expense of the well-being of local communities. In addition, because of economic hardships in the Third World and other external pressures, these states are encouraged to industrialize, and for this reason engage in partnerships with TNCs. In some cases, the Nigerian government has allowed Shell to evacuate inhabitants of oil-rich communities leading to further marginalization of these communities (Ibid.). The partnership of the multinationals with the government clearly favours the corporate and government elites, who are the primary recipients of the oil wealth, and tends to work against the local communities.

TNCs are a growing force in the global capitalist system which encourages capital accumulation via the cheapest methods of resource extraction and labour use possible. Because of the Third World's dependence on the economic benefits of TNCs' operations, the economic power of TNCs can be equated to political power. Despite this, TNCs are not immune to challenge from other actors. Because of their high profile nature they are vulnerable to boycotts and other actions that reduce their capital accumulation and must maintain an image and reputation consistent with their consumers' values and ideals (Bryant and Bailey 1997).

In many ways, the mainstream sustainable development discourse has been incorporated into the policies and ideologies of TNCs. This so-called "greening" of business has resulted in stronger environmental policies and the use of "green" technology in production processes. This has been one manifestation of the growing corporate current of environmentalism and has been the result of increased consumer awareness and demand for more environmentally safe products in the North. However, while TNCs may project a consumer-friendly environmental image, their practice of business has failed, in some cases, to meet these standards.

This has been particularly true in Third World countries, where the enforcement of environmental policy is weak and government partnerships with TNCs are powerful. Those most affected by such environmentally unsound business practices generally lack the economic consumer power that is so influential in the North. As a result, they must find other means of protecting their environment and demanding practice and policy changes from TNCs.

THE RISE AND FALL OF MOSOP

The origins of Ogoni mobilization could be said to date back to the 1940's when the political elite saw that a larger and more united group would help them compete for government resources. Over the decades following the discovery of oil in Ogoniland, environmental degradation and underdevelopment further acted to bring the Ogoni together in facing common threats and goals (Cayford 1996). This led to the emergence of strong Ogoni activism as they sought greater autonomy from the state, access to their natural resources, and economic and social development in their region (Salih 1999).

There were other ethnic groups in the region affected even more negatively than the Ogoni, yet these groups did not organize to make demands of the government and oil companies. Osaghae (1995) points to two reasons for the Ogoni's mobilization: the failure over the years of the government and oil companies to respond to their petitions, and, more importantly, the presence of a radically oriented leadership in the Ogoni ranks. Specifically, internationally known author and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa spear-headed the formation of MOSOP and held leading positions in the other primary organizations involved in mobilization. Saro-Wiwa was a dedicated defender of minority rights and his own Ogoni ethnic community, and as a renowned author had access to the international community of environmental and human rights organizations.

The primary strategies of MOSOP were to raise awareness of the common injustices suffered by the Ogoni people, to gain the support of clan leaders, to use media propaganda, and to give people a stake in the struggle by promising material and monetary rewards if the movement succeeded. The Ogoni's grievances included the environmental damage suffered as the result of exploitation of the oil resources in the region, suppression of their rights to a share of the oil revenue and oppression as a minority ethnic group. The first act of MOSOP in their early phases of passive resistance was to voice these grievances in the presentation of the Ogoni Bill of Rights (OBR) to the Nigerian government. Their primary demands were political autonomy within the confederation of Nigerian states, the protection of the Ogoni languages, a fair share of the economic resources gained from Ogoniland,

and protection of their environment (OBR 1990). The government, however, did not respond positively to their requests (Cayford 1996).

Over the next two years in 1991 and 1992, MOSOP continued their non-violent, passive strategy by taking their fight to the global stage. Through Saro-Wiwa's connections, MOSOP began networking with human rights and environmental NGOs around the world such as Greenpeace and the Rainforest Action Network (Obi 2002). In this way, MOSOP was able to harness the growing power of the global environmental justice and human rights movements. Their struggle against the corporate giant Shell Corporation appealed to environmental and human rights activists worldwide, and became a symbol for other such struggles in other Third World countries.

In December of 1992, after two years with no response from the Nigerian government, MOSOP stepped up their efforts with a direct demand to the oil companies to pay billions of dollars in compensation for environmental damages incurred over the years, as well as demands that action be taken to stop further environmental degradation and to implement environmental protection programs. They followed up with a mass demonstration of over 300,000 people, well over half of the entire Ogoni population. They voiced their demands for the right to self-determination and a share of the oil revenue as well as compensation for environmental damage. Similar demonstrations in the following months resulted in arrests and an increase in police harassment (Cayford 1996).

In November of the same year, General Sani Abacha came to power and installed an even more repressive regime and used more violent tactics against the ethnic minorities in the oil producing Niger Delta. In addition to harassment of Ogoni leaders, the Nigerian state set out to encourage violent conflicts between the Ogoni and neighbouring groups as well as within the Ogoni themselves (Ibid.). In addition to the intra-group fighting, the newly formed Rivers State Internal Security Task Force was wreaking havoc on the local communities with regular village raids, beating and raping villagers and committing any number of human rights abuses (Ibeanu 2000).

In addition to inciting violence between different ethnic groups and direct repression by the police and armed forces, the government took advantage of internal strife within MOSOP. When four Ogoni leaders were killed, they took the opportunity to arrest Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni members and accused them of being responsible for the deaths. In 1995, after a trial which "blatantly violated international standards of due process and produced no credible evidence" (HRW 1999), the "Ogoni Nine", including Saro-Wiwa were sentenced to death and

expeditiously hanged on November 10, 1995 (Cayford 1996:194). With the death of the Ogoni leaders and increasing repressive actions by the Abacha regime against the Ogoni communities, MOSOP was seriously weakened.

In 1998, General Abacha died and was replaced by General Abdulsalami Abubakar. Under the new regime, the unprecedented repression unleashed on the Ogoni people was relaxed and Nigeria was set on the road to democratic rule, which was achieved a year later in 1999 with the election of President Olusegun Obasanjo (HRW 1999). The transition from the military regime to democratic rule was welcomed by the Ogoni people who have continually experienced repression and marginalization under the successive military governments. The Ogoni considered democracy a process that could encourage dialogue, negotiation, freedom of expression and equality. However, the democratic government in Nigeria continues to favour the ethnic majorities in the Northern regions and they continue to control the economic resources of the country. The power struggle between the state-oil alliance and the Ogoni communities continues and Shell remains active in the country (Ibid.).

THE POLITICAL ECOLOGY OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

MOSOP AND ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE

Some of the successes of MOSOP include the considerable international recognition gained by the Ogoni people of their environmental plights and human rights abuses. Protests against Shell Corporation around the world, withdrawal of ambassadors from Nigeria, sanctions and oil embargos against Nigeria, and the ban of arms sales are some of the manifestations of this international attention (Lee et al. 1997). There has been an increased official recognition of the Ogoni's need for compensation and a development commission has been put in place in the Niger Delta. Federal revenue to the oil-producing states has been increased from 5% to 13%. Also, various government bodies have been established, such as the Federal Ministry of the Environment, in an attempt to implement the environmental action plans and laws as encouraged by the UN convention and declarations.

No group has organized with the same cohesiveness and dynamism in the Niger Delta since MOSOP, and though MOSOP has weakened considerably in its local operations it continues to function as satellite groups around the world. In this way, it continues to bring international attention to the struggles of the Ogoni and other minority groups as they face ongoing environmental degradation from oil production and lack of social and economic development despite the region's resource wealth. Over the years, Shell Corporation has incorporated more environmental and development programs into its operations in Nigeria, partly as a

response to the sustainable development push by the UN and partly as a response to pressure from other international organizations and consumers. In last year's annual report, Shell says they have shifted from a community assistance to a community development strategy with a focus on capacity building (SPDC 2003). In this way, they hope to ensure sustainability of their programs by empowering local communities rather than simply funnelling financial assistance to communities and local programs through government officials. It is not clear whether this approach and other environmental programs on the part of TNCs are actually effective in practice and not just company rhetoric. The fact remains that the Niger Delta region is extremely poor and underdeveloped despite their oil production, and local communities are on the losing end of the state-oil alliance. This is apparent in the continuing protests and unmet demands being made by Niger Delta communities today that are in many ways inspired by the struggles of MOSOP.

The sustainable development discourse that became dominant after the 1980s has had a strong influence on the actions of governments and businesses. Despite the growth of green business, economic growth is encouraged at its current pace and protection of the environment is, in some ways, considered secondary. By concentrating on the exploitation of oil for economic benefit, the state and corporations can claim legitimacy of their actions through the sustainable development discourse. Shell and the state design "top-down" development and environmental programs to satisfy the sustainability aspect of their exploitation, but these programs have little effect at the grassroots level. The dominant culture of the sustainable development discourse has made it difficult for grassroots efforts to put forth their own ideas of environmental use and protection as an alternative.

Nonetheless, MOSOP's effectiveness in harnessing the power of the global environmental justice discourse contributed to their eventual successes. At the time of mobilization in 1990, there were several prominent environmental justice movements emerging in other parts of the world. Issues of land rights, indigenous resource use and livelihood security were becoming more visible to the global community (Moser and Norton 2001). Their common message of environmental justice was carried further into the mainstream by the involvement of a number of well-established international NGOs, such as Greenpeace. While sustainable development is still the dominant model for policy-making and program development, environmental justice has gained some influence in these arenas as well. By appealing to this global discourse, MOSOP was able to put additional pressure on the powerful state and corporate actors to attend to the requests of the Ogoni communities.

The ability of a movement to harness the power of international actors such as other governments and international NGOs has an important influence on the success or failure of movements such as MOSOP. In some cases, a more repressive government may contribute to international attention and action. The appeal of a movement's goals and strategies to the global media and public also influences the amount of international support gained. In addition, the presence of a relevant global discourse related to the movement's message is key to the involvement of international actors. In the case study examined in this article, the global environmental justice discourse played an important role in the origins and successes of MOSOP. At the same time, the dominant culture of sustainable development pushed by governments and international institutions acted to legitimize the activity of powerful actors in this case. However, it is interesting to note that in an era of a different cultural context, such as prior to the origins of the environmental movement in the 1960's, the Ogoni uprising would likely not have had the considerable impact that it did.

THE POWER OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

The dynamics of a social movement, particularly in the Third World context, depend heavily on the distribution of power among different actors. In the case of environmental movements and according to political ecologists, power is related to access and control of natural resources. Conflicts arise in part due to an unequal distribution of power among the state, grassroots actors and others. Traditionally strong actors such as the state and TNCs have greater control over and access to environmental resources than weak actors such as local communities. Here, MOSOP represents the attempt of local communities to gain power and control of their environments in relation to the opposing forces of the Nigerian government and Shell Corporation.

Though the grassroots organizing of MOSOP has managed to increase the Ogoni's power in relation to the state and oil corporations, these latter actors represent powerful opposition to their demands and continue to exercise authority over oil resources. While according to political ecology, the state plays a dual role as protector of the environment and developer of the economy (Bryant and Bailey 1997), the Nigerian government has used its position to enhance economic growth at the expense of the environment and the livelihoods of citizens.

The Nigerian state has depended heavily, both economically and politically, on petroleum revenue since its discovery in the Niger Delta in 1956. The successive military regimes have monopolized the exploitation of oil by controlling and determining access to these resources, as well as the distribution of wealth accrued from them, at the exclusion of local communities in the oil producing regions. By

prioritizing oil extraction over environmental regulations and community development programs, the government has attracted the business of oil multinationals and formed powerful alliances with these corporations (Lee et al. 1997). Through their partnerships with the government, these companies gain unprecedented access to land and oil resources and hence, a position of power. With the dependence of the Nigerian government on its oil wealth and the oil corporations, the economic power of TNCs such as Shell is translated to political power. In other words, Shell can use its economic influence on the government to gain access to oil resources and the accompanying monetary benefits.

Due to political marginalization, the Ogoni people have little economic resources despite the natural wealth of the land upon which they live (Cayford 1996). The government-corporate alliance controls the land and resources upon which the Ogoni people depend. Political ecologists note the existence of a distribution of costs and benefits associated with environmental change (Bryant and Bailey 1997). In the current case, the state and TNCs have accrued most of the wealth gained from oil revenues, whereas the local communities have been subjected to the environmental costs associated with oil extraction, further marginalizing these communities and exacerbating the poverty problem. As weak actors in a struggle for survival, the Ogoni people have mobilized in an attempt to regain control of their land. As MOSOP, they have used a diverse repertoire of strategies and have collectively strengthened their position in the struggle for resource access.

THE FUTURE OF THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

Environmental movements in the Third World demonstrate the need for changing discourse. Sustainable development, as the dominant stream of environmentalism today, is not clearly applicable to Third World environmental problems. The above examination of MOSOP from a political ecology perspective offers a window to a different view of such issues by emphasizing political and economic aspects of marginalization in Third World communities.

Environmental justice is a reflection of the need for alternative views and an expression of a different kind of environmentalism that strengthens and is strengthened by Third World social movements such as MOSOP. MOSOP demonstrates the intricacies of Third World environmental problems, the importance of political and economic issues, and the complex relationships between Third World governments, transnational corporations and local communities. Sustainable development, in its emphasis on future generations, does not provide adequate solutions for today's marginalized poor. On the other hand, environmental

justice offers a critique of sustainable development and begins to emphasize human rights and recognize the unequal power distributions in Third World settings.

The current state of affairs in the Niger Delta demonstrates the significant challenge facing local communities in reclaiming their environments from the grip of powerful state and corporate alliances. Just one week prior to the writing of this conclusion, a major occupation of Shell and Chevron oil operations by Ijaw villagers from the Niger Delta region ended (BBC News 2004). Their reason for protest is the same as that of the Ogoni people in 1990—the continuing poverty and underdevelopment of local communities while billions of dollars worth of oil are extracted from their land every year. While such injustices have gained more global attention in recent years, the struggle continues until the concepts of the environment and development are better adapted to our changing world and the needs of the majority of the human race.

It is clear that the global environmental movement has changed since its early stages in the 1960s. In many ways, it has fragmented into a number of streams that have been taken up by different members of society with very different goals and ideals. This article demonstrates how some members of the global community have been left behind by the dominant stream of sustainable development. While environmental justice has begun to address some of the important issues for these marginalized groups, there remains a weakening divide that threatens the integrity of human communities and the natural world. Perhaps the environmental justice movement and the voices of Third World communities can lead us toward an integration of important environmental, social, political and economic issues and a more cohesive and strengthened form of environmentalism.

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