

# Two Paths to a Greener Future

## Environmentalism and Civil Society Development in Russia

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Casual readers of the Western press might be surprised to discover that in spite of the steady stream of negative reports about Russian political apathy and fatalism, the Russian environmental movement is alive and active. Environmental organizations working on issues from nuclear safety to local parks can be found in each of the Russian Federation's eighty-nine constituent regions. In the decade since the Soviet Union's collapse, these organizations have weathered a number of inauspicious social, economic, and political changes and have developed strategies to survive and continue their activism. Many Russian environmental organizations owe their ability to continue to operate, and indeed proliferate, to Western foreign assistance, primarily in the form of competitive grant programs designed to foster the development of civil society and democratization in Russia; at the same time, other small groups have developed survival strategies based on resources in their local communities.

In this article I assess the role of Russian environmental organizations from the perspective of their contribution to the development of civil society in post-Soviet Russia. Drawing on the social scientific literature on civil society, I consider environmental groups' role as civic associations that serve as intermediaries between the state and society, transmitting ideas and information, influencing government policymaking, and encouraging citizen participation in the public sphere. In narrowly focusing on the intermediary role of the organizations, I refer only briefly to the substantive goals and achievements of Russian environmentalists in their efforts to limit environmental degradation, conserve ecosystems, and strengthen environmental policies. Although Russian environmentalists have faced a number of obstacles, they have developed the movement's organizational base and continue to articulate a greener vision of Russia's future.

To clarify environmentalists' contribution to civil society development in Russia, I separate environmental groups into two broad categories: professionalized

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environmental organizations that emulate Western advocacy NGOs, and grassroots citizens' initiatives.<sup>1</sup> This distinction captures the difference between two classes of environmental groups that have been subject to different, albeit overlapping, opportunities and incentives, and that have formed different relationships with Russian state and societal actors. I will demonstrate that the differences between the two categories can be traced to two related factors: the groups' resource bases and their relations with Russian government institutions and officials. Foreign assistance donors and scholars most often have focused on professionalized organizations when assessing civil society development in Russia.<sup>2</sup> I argue that while professionalized environmental organizations bear a closer resemblance to Western advocacy NGOs, they are not very effective in an intermediary role. Environmental groups at the grassroots level are often overlooked because of their small size and scant resources, yet they may prove to be more sustainable and more effective at encouraging participation, generating social trust as the basis for future cooperation and participation, and fostering Russian civil society the long term.

Professionalized environmental organizations are characterized by their reliance on external sources of funding, primarily foreign grants. Partly as a result of their reliance on foreign funds, however, professionalized organizations generally lack ties to their natural constituency—the Russian population—and therefore have a weak claim to representing the public. As relatively isolated elite organizations, they have had a low impact on public participation. While foreign funding provides the professionalized organizations the independence to challenge government policies on issues such as freedom of information, transparent policymaking, and government accountability, they also have been singled out as targets of government repression, a countermeasure made easier by their weak societal support. Grassroots organizations, in contrast, are less likely to rely on foreign grants and tend to be embedded within pre-existing local institutions. They embrace a broad definition of “ecology,” focusing on the way environmental issues interact with the day-to-day lives of average citizens. They tend to either be too small to interest the government or to have cooperative relations with state officials, particularly at lower municipal or district (*raion*) levels. Although grassroots groups are relatively weak and often apolitical, they create opportunities for citizen participation and local activism that are crucial to their role as potential intermediaries.

### **The Russian Environmental Movement during Perestroika**

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Russian environmental movement appeared to be promising as an agent of civil society development in Russia. Environmentalists played a historic role in mobilizing grievances against the state, eroding the legitimacy of the Soviet administration, and helping to precipitate the collapse of the Soviet regime. In the late 1980s, Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost* initiated an increased flow of information about social problems and a public discussion of their causes and possible remedies. The government identified environmentalism as a topic unlikely to threaten the regime and permitted relatively

open debate of environmental issues. Accidents such as the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and extensive industrial pollution prompted concerned citizens to demand greater information and government response. Environmentalists were able to mobilize thousands of Soviet citizens to sign petitions and demonstrate against further development of the country's nuclear power industry. In such a brittle, yet reform-minded political system, even small social protests had a profound effect. At its height, the environmental movement succeeded in closing or derailing the construction of more than fifty nuclear reactors and a number of hydroelectric power stations and gas pipelines.<sup>3</sup>

Few environmentalists during this period were members of organizations *per se*; instead individuals congregated in meetings and initiative groups to strategize how to gather public support and influence the government. Umbrella groups such as the Socio-Ecological Union spread information and coordinated activism throughout the Soviet Union and began to reach out to the international environmental community.<sup>4</sup> During this period, the environmental movement benefited from the lack of alternative venues for societal participation, becoming a "surrogate movement" for more politically sensitive goals, such as ending Communist Party control and achieving independence for the Soviet republics.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, in the perestroika period, Russian environmentalists succeeded even more than established green movements in the West, both in terms of achieving their environmental goals and acting as a force for political liberalization and public participation.

Their success, combined with the increasing environmental consciousness of the public, generated high hopes that the post-Soviet environmental movement would continue to be a source of social and political change. Some observers anticipated that the more open political environment of post-Soviet Russia would be fertile ground for social activism of all types.<sup>6</sup> They believed that citizens' groups would spring up naturally in the benevolent context of new democratic institutions, laws, and practices. In fact, however, the 1990s were a difficult decade for many fledgling environmental organizations and Russian environmentalists did not achieve outcomes akin to their spectacular victories of the late Soviet period. There are many reasons for the decline. First, the movement achieved a number of its original goals during perestroika, and some supporters were satisfied by the early achievements. Second, rapid economic and political change caused citizens to withdraw into the private sphere and focus on personal survival. Finally, and most notably for this analysis of civil society development, Russia's partial democratization has not offered environmentalists many access points to the policy making process, and economic instability and weak performance have made it difficult for environmental groups to find domestic funding.

In spite of these obstacles, the number of environmental organizations and their scope of activity have rebounded quietly after a dramatic drop in the early 1990s. Foreign funding from aid programs designed to encourage civil society development and funds from transnational environmental organizations have played a significant role in the growth. In their efforts to support democratization

in Russia, many foreign donors concluded that social organizations (*obshchestvennye organizatsii*), viewed as proto-NGOs similar to Western advocacy or interest groups, could be an effective vehicle for strengthening civil society.<sup>7</sup> There are approximately 60,000 legally registered social organizations operating in Russia today, and estimates that encompass smaller, unregistered groups are much higher.<sup>8</sup> Of those numbers, environmental groups make up at least 6 percent.<sup>9</sup> While small as a percentage of social organizations, the environmental movement is commonly recognized as having spawned some of the most experienced and professional social organizations in Russia. These professionalized environmental groups tend to have greater access to technology than social organizations working on other issues, have developed more contacts with the transnational activist community, and have been among the most effective at taking advantage of external funding opportunities.<sup>10</sup> Based on surveys of green activists, Russian sociologists have argued that contacts between Russian environmental leaders and westerners have increased ten times between 1991 and 1998, and that about 75 percent of the financial resources of Russian environmental organizations now come from the West.<sup>11</sup> In my own research, more than 70 percent of environmental groups I contacted had received foreign aid, many from grant programs designed specifically to promote the development of civil society in Russia.

### Citizens' Groups and Civil Society

“Civil society” is an ambitious yet ambiguous term. It is a concept that has come to symbolize optimism about citizen participation and democratic renewal and to represent a possible remedy for diverse social and political ills. Idealized accounts, usually offered by politicians, paint civil society as a realm in which citizens engage in the political processes that affect their lives, using the free flow of information to act together in advocating for the public welfare and calling government officials to account. Recent academic work reflects a renewed appreciation for the complexity of actual civil societies, their potentially undemocratic features, and strengths and limitations,<sup>12</sup> but a resolutely optimistic vein persists in both scholarship and practice. This optimism motivates many of the civil society development programs in the former Soviet Union.

In their study of democratization, Linz and Stepan offer a fairly typical definition, asserting that civil society is “that arena of the polity where self-organizing groups, movements, and individuals, relatively autonomous from the state, attempt to articulate values, create associations and solidarities, and advance their interests.”<sup>13</sup> “Civil society” has been used to describe all human activity carried out between the family and the state, but it is this idea of collective action by self-organizing groups that has offered the most specific impetus to empirical studies of citizens' associations as an element of civil society. In the broadest sense, the organizations that populate civil society serve as intermediaries between the citizen and the state. Tocqueville is the most often cited theorist to recognize that citizens' groups can serve as schools of democracy.<sup>14</sup> Putnam, elaborating on Tocqueville, argues that civic engagement, often fostered by associations, generates

social trust by fostering norms of reciprocity, facilitating communication, and providing a basis for future cooperation.<sup>15</sup> A survey of the literature on civil society identifies several other functions of citizens' associations, including aggregating public opinion; articulating public opinions to policymakers; presenting policy alternatives; stimulating public participation and developing new channels of participation; monitoring the state to promote transparency and accountability; and training the next generation of social and political leaders.<sup>16</sup>

Civil society remains a largely static concept, however. Considering the dramatic political and economic changes transforming Russia, we need to better understand how certain elements of civil society evolve over time. Civil society

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development in Russia has been affected by diverse factors such as the post-Soviet legacy of political cynicism, continuing government ambivalence about the role of society in politics, and foreign efforts to re-create Western-style state-society interactions. The conjunction of these factors has led many Russian social organizations to rely on external

sources of funding.<sup>17</sup> This reliance in part explains the prevalence of professional environmental organizations modeled after Western advocacy groups. Yet have these Western-inspired professional organizations contributed to the development of a civil society in Russia? Do they act as intermediaries, or do they merely reflect our desire for Russian state-society relations to correspond to the Western experience? Donors undoubtedly have encouraged the continued survival of Russian environmentalism through their support of professionalized social organizations, but whether this proliferation of organizations leads to greater citizen participation and state accountability remains an open question.

### **Environmental Groups: Professionals and Citizens**

The distinction between professionalized environmental organizations and grassroots environmental groups in Russia reflects organizational forms and strategies influenced by the organizations' resource base. These organizational differences lead to different roles in civil society development. A review of characteristics common to each variety of organization most clearly illustrates the two categories.<sup>18</sup>

Professionalized environmental organizations tend to be grant-based groups led by activists drawn primarily from the intelligentsia and modeled after Western NGOs. As registered nongovernmental, nonprofit organizations, they represent a new institutional form in Russian society.<sup>19</sup> Their activism frequently mirrors the goals, language, and strategies of the transnational environmental movement. These groups often directly oppose the policies of the Russian gov-

ernment, either by presenting independent scientific research or by promoting alternative visions of economic and political organization.

Grassroots environmental groups, in contrast, tend to be based on domestic, usually local, resources. They most often rely on the enthusiasm and unpaid labor of their leaders and small donations from local business and government institutions. In fact, many grassroots groups are based on Soviet-era administrative, cultural, or educational institutions. In effect, their leaders recycle the institutions for the purpose of enabling local environmental activism. These groups tend to be oriented around issues of immediate relevance to the local community. Although they identify themselves as environmental (*ekologicheskii*) organizations, they espouse a somewhat looser definition of environmentalism than the Western connotation of conservation and pollution abatement. While professionalized organizations frequently oppose government policies directly, grassroots groups are more likely to have a neutral or accommodating relationship with local government officials.

Drawing on these different organizational characteristics, we can identify two distinct strategies in environmentalists' relations with the state and with society. First, consider the organizations' behavior in the political sphere. Professionalized environmental organizations tend to mimic Western advocacy groups by addressing the authorities from outside the system, employing a more adversarial tone, and pushing for alternative configurations of existing institutions and resources. Grassroots groups tend to work from within, encouraging incremental change in the social and political status quo. In their relations with societal actors, reliance on external sources of funding to some degree obviates the need for professionalized groups to develop membership or roots in society, whereas grassroots groups must find some source of local support to survive.

The different orientations and strategies of these two types of groups are directly related to that fact that they have evolved within two different opportunity structures—the political, economic, and ideational incentives and constraints that constitute the larger context within which the organizations develop.<sup>20</sup> Professionalized environmental organizations are able to take advantage of opportunities at the transnational level to some degree, while grassroots organizations remain firmly within the constraints of their domestic political and economic context.

The differences between these two opportunity structures are most apparent in terms of economic incentives and funding. Emerging from an extremely resource-poor society, very few environmental groups are able to rely on domestic sources of funding, such as local philanthropy or membership fees, to finance their activism. Foreign grant programs not only finance many environmental organizations—recipient groups also gain access to a cache of organizational and mobilizational strategies, expertise, and partnerships. To a certain extent, external funding and its concomitant benefits offer the recipient group an “escape hatch” from the unstable and inhospitable Russian economic and political environment, while still allowing the group to work on Russian environmental issues. In return, the granting agency stipulates conformity with certain Western organizational norms, the preparation of required reports and evaluations, and use of Western account-

ing standards. Grassroots groups generally do not receive foreign grants at all or have received only the smallest “seed” grants. Their failure to win grants can be attributed to the grassroots groups’ lack information about programs, lack of skills necessary to complete the grant application, interests that are incompatible with those of grant programs, or explicit choice not to apply. For whatever reason, unable to escape local conditions for the more receptive transnational community, these grassroots groups must make do with local networks and resources.

Russia’s political environment is the second important feature of the structure in which environmentalists operate. In spite of significant political liberalization, Russia’s political transformation has only partially democratized institutions and practices. Executive dominance over the legislature, the lack of transparency in policymaking, corruption, and the weak rule of law and court system create a difficult environment for social organizations of all sorts. Given the Russian government’s closed, if not hostile, stance toward citizen activism, environmental groups’ different resource bases inspire different strategies for interacting with government officials. Professionalized environmental organizations tend to orient themselves around ensuring future grant income, even though transnational relationships often attract negative government attention. Grassroots groups attempt to find areas of activity that will not antagonize local governments or jeopardize other local relationships. As foreign grants have been more available in some regions of Russia than others, the two types of organizations also have tended to cluster regionally. Foreign grants for environmental organizations have tended to be more available in regions that have a relatively open or liberal political administration, such as St. Petersburg or Novgorod, or in regions with high-profile environmental problems, such as Vladivostok or Irkutsk. These regions, as a result, tend to have a much more professional environmental sector that more closely approximates that of the West. Grassroots environmental groups, in contrast, can be found in every region of Russia but predominate in areas less endowed with foreign aid.<sup>21</sup>

Both professionalized and grassroots environmental groups hold promise for civil society development in Russia. Many observers have seized on professionalized groups for their potential role as interlocutors with the government, checking government power and offering alternative policy ideas. In some ways, however, the grassroots have advantages in their direct relationships with local communities that are overlooked by foreign observers. Professionalized organizations have more obviously altered Russia’s organizational landscape, but grassroots groups may offer a greater opportunity to generate social change by changing citizens’ lives—their apartment buildings, parks, schools, and streets. One caveat is in order. Certainly every typical civil society, or issue area within the third sector (to use the language of foreign aid practitioners), has some elite groups and some grassroots groups, some professionals and some citizen enthusiasts. These two levels represent two niches within civil society; ideally they are both filled with committed activists and are linked together through information sharing. The difference that I have identified in the case of Russian environmentalism is that the groups operate under very different incentives and constraints,

leading to profoundly different relationships with state and society actors and different contributions to civil society development in Russia. The differences will be elaborated in the sections below.

### **Professionalized Environmental Organizations**

Russian professionalized environmental organizations are engaged in a wide variety of ambitious and important projects. To offer a few examples, the St. Petersburg Clean Baltic Coalition works with its Scandinavian counterparts to develop regional solutions for transboundary pollution; the Phoenix organization in Vladivostok, in cooperation with the Global Survival Network, advocates the protection of the Siberian tiger; and the Union of Concerned Scientists in Novosibirsk investigates the extent of radioactive pollution throughout Siberia. One of the most successful professionalized environmental groups in Russia is the Center for Russian Environmental Policy (CREP). Founded in 1993 by a group of scientists, including Alexei Yablokov, former science advisor to President Yeltsin, the CREP directs scientific studies to assess environmental risk, prepares environmental policy alternatives, often building on the experience of other countries, and disseminates the proposals to relevant government committees. Studies have tackled issues such as chemical pollution in Russia, the state of the country's Arctic environment, the development of environmental law, and sustainable development. The organization is well developed: it has a board of directors, office space in Moscow, a permanent staff, and is supported by a number of private and public foreign funds, including the W. Alton Jones Foundation, the MacArthur and Mott Foundations, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and several foreign embassies. Members of the center have reached out to create a coalition of environmental groups, mostly other professionalized organizations, that meets regularly at the CREP's Moscow office. Organizations with similar objectives exist in other regions, such as the Fund for Wildlife in Khabarovsk and the Institute for Sustainable Natural Resource Use in Vladivostok. These groups command considerable scientific expertise in presenting their policy alternatives to the government.

As noted above, professional environmental organizations operate within an opportunity structure defined to large extent by foreign grant programs. The possibilities and obligations that accompany the funds, the issues favored by donors, and the opportunities of "scaling up" the group's activities and winning future grants all create incentives for certain patterns of organizational development. Relying on external resources affects the environmental organizations' relationships with domestic actors, as well. They are able to tackle more complex issues, to utilize the talents and energies of a professional staff, and to use their independence from domestic financing to challenge the government's policies and practices. However, external funding also allows them to neglect relations with their domestic Russian audience. Professional environmental organizations tend to have weak relationships with local communities and increasingly are depicted by the government as non-Russian. Most professionalized environmental organizations, including those described above, are not membership based and few organizations



engage in community outreach or work to cultivate members.<sup>22</sup> Olga Pitsunova, a long-time environmental activist from southern Russia, criticizes many environmental organizations for their detachment from society, arguing that as professional organizations have sprung up, they have “formed what they called the third sector and they work without, or almost without, connections with the population.”<sup>23</sup>

The goals of professionalized environmental organizations tend to be similar to those of transnational activists and to reflect the issues emphasized in foreign grant programs. The goals often are oriented around issues of global activism such as conservation, biodiversity, the protection of endangered species, sustainable development and natural resource use, global climate change, and nuclear contamination. Programs centered on large mammals such as the Siberian tiger or snow leopard in the Russia Far East, or unique natural environments such as Lake Baikal have been very popular. Not surprisingly, foreign grant funding tends to be directed at areas of international benefit. Donors do not impose these issue areas and goals on the Russian organizations; however, they are of interest to environmental activists and offer the benefit of greater funding opportunities. A more important factor in civil society development is that these priorities do not emerge from dialogue with the local Russian population, although work in these areas may indeed benefit Russian citizens. Local Russian communities often are not aware of or interested in these projects, seeing them as having little relevance for their daily lives. For example, in the Russian Far East Siberian tiger protection programs generally focus on supporting scientific research, combating poaching, or passing new protective legislation. Since Far Eastern rural residents see the tiger a predator and the funding for these projects does little to benefit their impoverished communities, they generally ignore the programs and occasionally oppose them.

In emphasizing the professional and transnational aspects of their organizations, leaders of professionalized environmental groups are motivated both by their own desire to follow a model shown to be efficacious by environmentalists in other parts of the world and by the encouragement of grant programs to emulate the environmental advocacy groups that are familiar in Western civil society. They are assisted in this emulation by donor training programs that teach neophyte activists about grant writing, computer skills, using the Internet, accounting, public and media relations.<sup>24</sup> In addition to technical expertise, donor training conveys certain attitudes about appropriate organizational strategies and culture.<sup>25</sup> Activists are often enthusiastic participants in training, hoping to learn the secrets of organizational survival and success. This training has undoubtedly raised the professional qualifications of many environmental leaders. The risk, however, is that the number of people trained and the amount of information disseminated in training, as an easily quantified measure of civil society development, become the primary activity and objective of an organization.<sup>26</sup> Training may become an end in itself, not a tool for promoting activism and social change. Trained leaders emerge imbued with the attributes of an organizational form, but less enlightened about how to mobilize the population to reach their original goals. Activists are better equipped to organize conferences or seminars, publish

reports, or attend international meetings than they are to change hearts and minds by engaging the public and, in turn, represent their interests.

For most environmental organizations, with the exception of international organizations such as Greenpeace and WWF, the Western NGO model remains more of an aspiration than an achievement. Still, whether they succeed or not, efforts to emulate the NGO model absorb significant amounts of time and energy. The reward for some Russian environmental groups for the successful completion of training is a “promotion” or graduation to the status as a resource center, a center that imparts NGO expertise and trains local grassroots groups.<sup>27</sup> Although this may be an effective strategy for expanding the circle of “trained professionals,” it has further diverted some groups from their original goals and community activism. Ultimately, professionalism may serve to reinforce environmental organizations’ elite status in society.

Many environmental leaders, particularly those in the biological sciences were already members of the societal elite, having risen out of the intelligentsia and particularly out of faculties in the biological sciences and particularly out of faculties in the biological science. Those environmentalists tend to be more attuned to the demands of grant programs and fit relatively comfortably within the transnational milieu where higher education and a command of foreign languages are the norm. An evaluation of USAID support for environmental organizations offers evidence of the elite nature of most Russian environmental groups, concluding that 65 percent of participants in the environment movement have a higher education and an astounding 23 percent are candidates or doctors of science.<sup>28</sup> That is a segment of the population that has been hard hit by decreasing state funding for education and research and is struggling to maintain its social status. In some cases, environmental research projects become a way for members of the scientific community to continue their research as state institutes close due to lack of funds. One environmental leader commented that projects of professionalized groups are valuable because they “allow specialists to continue to develop their work and allows them to move beyond the provinces,” in other words to maintain their societal position and to escape the constraints of their local environment.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, the role of professionalized organizations as information disseminators can become confined to circulating environmental data within scientific circles or to transnational partners.

Activists from professionalized environmental organizations claim to represent the interests of the Russian population, but also frequently lament the low level of ecological consciousness among the general public, the difficulty of mobilizing citizens, and the lack of support for their organization. Connecting

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with local communities can be even harder when environmental groups have adopted transnational goals and rhetoric that reinforce their elite status. Grant-based groups have no direct need to convince the public of the validity and utility of their projects. Some groups have realized that lack of involvement with local communities is detrimental to their long-term goals and have made efforts to tailor international environmental projects to local circumstances. For example, the TACIS-funded Environmental Awareness Raising Program in St. Petersburg expended significant time and energy reworking the international Global Action Plan, designed to cultivate environmental practices in the home, to fit the realities of post-Soviet life. Many of the adjustments were as simple as recognizing that urban Russians are likely to live in apartment buildings and that the plan's prescriptions for energy saving and waste disposal in free-standing homes needed to be altered to fit Russian circumstances. The effort to redesign a program from the bottom up is an exception, however. Not surprisingly, environmental leaders often comment that the Western press shows more interest in their work than the Russian media do.

Russia's professional environmental activists have begun to recognize that if their projects are carried out without the interest or even knowledge of local communities, the lack of support might limit the movement's sustainability and success. A Vladivostok environmentalist whose organization collapsed after failing to win successive foreign grants noted the relationship between sustainability and local support. She traced the failure of her organization to the fact that its founding mission, producing environmental publications, was in part prompted by the availability of support from a foreign grant program for that issue. "The organization did not depend on the demand or awareness of citizens," and when donor priorities shifted to other issues, there was no local interest in its survival.<sup>30</sup> In general, the Russian public remains skeptical about unfamiliar and elite professionalized social organizations. In a survey asking for opinions on social organizations (*obshchestvennye organizatsii*), more than 80 percent of Russian respondents thought that these groups exist only at a formal level, for their own benefit, and do not work to improve the situation in Russia.<sup>31</sup> Several Russian environmentalists reported that when they inform acquaintances that they work for a non-commercial social organization, the most common reaction is disbelief that this type of group even exists in Russia today. This skepticism is at least partly attributable to professionalized organizations' weak roots in local communities and their failure to publicize their activities.

Another factor in professionalized environmental organizations' limited role in civil society development is their relationship with the federal government. Professionalized organizations persistently have demanded access to government information, advocated for transparent policymaking, and networked with their transnational counterparts to benefit from earlier research and models. After a decade of activism, however, the groups have yet to become accepted and regular actors in Russian politics. At the regional and municipal levels, many Russian government officials do not see a role for societal participation in policymaking, or, if the desirability of participation is accepted in theory, officials often

have not accepted the environmentalists' claim to speak on behalf of the public. In general, regional and municipal governments have been most amenable to environmental organizations' participation when it is confined to an "expertise and agreement" role, in which environmentalists, as apolitical scientists, offer a stamp of approval to government policies. Even when environmentalists agree to play this role, however, they continue to be hampered by the Soviet legacy of strict environmental laws with lax implementation and enforcement and a weak legal system. Thus far, the environmentalists' few successes, such as creating new protected lands and monitoring environmental violations, have been ad hoc victories. They have occurred outside any formal participatory process and cannot be taken as signs of a shift toward consistent application of the rule of law in environmental protection.

Still, working with lower levels of government offers a greater likelihood of success than lobbying the federal administration, which has been overtly hostile toward many environmentalists.<sup>32</sup> The government has singled out grant-based environmental groups in particular as alleged fronts for spying and other anti-Russian activity.<sup>33</sup> As the well-publicized trials of environmental whistle-blowers Aleksandr Nikitin and Grigori Pasko demonstrate, environmentalists have faced an aggressive government response, particularly when they have focused on the role of the nuclear industry or the military in environmental degradation. Federal government officials also have portrayed environmental campaigns against powerful natural resource industries, such as timber and petroleum, as tools of Western corporate espionage and inimical to economic growth. Again, their dependence on foreign funding and lack of local support add plausibility to the government's charges. The government's strong reaction to environmental activism does signal officials' concern that environmentalism could pose a threat to the political and economic status quo, and in that sense the political backlash could be construed as a sign of environmentalists' effectiveness. Yet the anti-environmental publicity orchestrated by the government has also deepened the general public's suspicion of environmentalists.

It would be unfair to criticize professionalized environmental organizations for not achieving the ambitious, and likely unrealistic, objectives thrust upon them by foreign aid donors and scholars advancing a civil society development agenda. These environmental organizations have attracted many talented individuals and have grown increasing professional; they have created a new type of organization in Russia, expanded the potential for international cooperation, trained new leaders, and increased Russia's human capital. At the same time, it is undeniable that they have developed in a way that has left them disconnected from the primary beneficiaries of their activism and opened them up to the government's "environmentalism as treason" rhetoric. Perhaps over time, as members of a larger transnational network, professionalized groups will succeed in influencing the behavior of the Russian government through monitoring compliance with international treaties and encouraging "boomerang effects" in which other states pressure Russia to clean up its act.<sup>34</sup> In this way, environmentalists' activities over the long term will likely benefit Russian citizens' natural environment and health, but

the public still would not be involved in setting the agenda or shaping the projects. Of course, NGOs usually do not simply reflect public opinion—they are generally at the forefront of social change. Thus far, however, professionalized organizations have spent very little time attempting to frame their projects in ways that will resonate with local communities or mobilize public opinion in their favor. Thus, they are located between state and society, but for the most part they do not yet link or mediate between the two spheres.

### **Environmental Groups at the Grassroots**

Given the lack of connection between professionalized environmental groups and Russian citizens, one might conclude that citizens are not concerned about environmental issues. Yet when surveyed directly about the environment, 86 percent of Russians responded that they are worried about the condition of the environment in their region and 65 percent believed that the environmental situation has grown worse in recent years.<sup>35</sup> The concern for the environment has not led to the belief that nongovernmental organizations are the most effective way to tackle the problems, however. In fact, in the same survey only 30 percent of respondents were aware that environmental groups exist in their region. Of respondents familiar with environmental organizations, they were almost evenly split as to whether the environmentalists' activities are positive (31 percent) or negative (32 percent). Given that citizens' latent interest in and concern about environmental issues has not led to significant support for even high-profile environmental organizations, it is interesting to note that grassroots environmental activism continues to grow in contemporary Russia.

The grassroots groups are working on a wide variety of local issues. In Bryansk and Vladimir, "Save the Springs" movements have mobilized small groups of local citizens, often elderly, to meet informally in an effort to restore areas surrounding natural fresh water sources. Many Russians believe that these springs possess sacred healing power. Citizens have asked the government to officially preserve the areas and protect them from illegal garbage dumping. As a result, several springs have been declared regional monuments. The volunteer-based Nadezhda initiative group, working in a small village in Primorskii Krai, was organized under the auspices one of the community's few public institutions—the local maritime museum—to create an environmental education center. The volunteers at the center organize field trips for children, teach basic biological monitoring techniques, and publicize their findings to raise awareness of environmental problems. Nadezhda has attracted the volunteer labor of parents and local teachers, and a local newspaper has agreed to report their activities. The Ozera initiative group in Vladivostok, founded by parents residing in nearby apartment buildings, organized a clean-up of a local pond where children often swim, convinced local industries in the vicinity to change their waste disposal practices, and lobbied the local administration to plant trees in the area. In Bryansk, the Egida Society for the protection of animals began as a club for dog lovers. Noting the growing stray pet population in the city and the threat to sanitation posed by the animals, the members convinced local officials to donate an abandoned building to the group and

then petitioned local businesses for construction materials to remodel the space. They now take in hundreds of animals each year. Other community-based groups that identify themselves as environmentalists comprise hunters and fishers, gardeners, and users of neighborhood parks.

Another widespread type of Russian grassroots environmental group focuses on spirituality, environmental ethics, and deep ecology. Such eco-spirituality organizations often base their convictions on religions such as Buddhism, or the philosophies of Rerikh and Vernadskii. These groups, including Green Attitude of Briansk and Mir of St. Petersburg, see the natural environment as a source of identity, energy, solace, and regeneration of faith. They are not organized around "projects," as in the NGO model, but work on raising environmental consciousness and preserving sacred lands such as Valaam and Altai. They tend to attract many individuals from the community who are more concerned with the solidary than the material benefits provided by grassroots activism.

Grassroots groups constitute the majority of environmental organizations in Russian regions that do not have dramatic environmental problems, that receive only a small proportion of foreign aid, and that have conservative yet stable local governments. In my research, I found grassroots groups to be the primary type of environmental activism in regions such as Vladimir and Briansk and outside the capital cities of other regions. Grassroots environmental groups generally work on local matters that fall within a broader definition of environmentalism, such as safety, health, and sanitation; children's education and self-esteem; spirituality; cleaning local recreation sites; and the "human ecology" of daily life. They bear little resemblance to elite professionalized organizations that have accountants and public relations strategies. In fact, professionalism is rarely among their goals. Instead the groups may start with a single person, a small family-based group, or a network of teachers or students. Donors occasionally express disappointment in these "nongovernmental individuals." As one European aid official notes, every now and then she thinks she has discovered an interesting new organization, but it often turns out to be simply "a Web site, a man, and his dog."<sup>36</sup> These groups frequently are unregistered, finding the registration process too onerous in terms of time, energy, and financing, and of little practical benefit.<sup>37</sup> Most grassroots environmental groups have never received foreign support, but some have won one time "seed" or mini-grants, usually less than \$1,000.<sup>38</sup> In recent years, however, many donors have moved away from small grant programs because of the time required to administer them, pressure from donor governments to disburse funds as quickly as possible, and legal difficulties in giving money to unregistered groups.

Grassroots groups tend to have relatively low organizational development, often lacking financial support and relying on the enthusiasm of a few volunteers, but these shortcomings also force grassroots activists to find creative solutions busing resources from their communities. Grassroots environmental activists become expert at recycling pre-existing institutions and networks. Contrary to the general depiction of Soviet-era institutions as relics of authoritarianism, grassroots groups tend to be based, often unofficially, on state organizations,

such as schools, libraries, small museums, dormitories, kindergartens, houses of children's creativity, former Pioneer summer camps, or nature preserves (*zapovedniki*). The strategy of reusing these institutions is particularly appropriate in post-Soviet societies that are still coping with the legacy of the Communist Party's organizational monopoly. Since they are unlikely to apply for or to win grants, the grassroots organizations become adept at locating in-kind donations. State organizations, sometimes unwittingly and sometimes with the consent of a sympathetic administrator, provide unused rooms and office furniture, or access to a telephone, fax or e-mail. Local newspapers and radio stations can be convinced to donate free advertising, and local business leaders may provide

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***“Environmentalists’ failed campaign against importing nuclear waste into Russia illustrates their largely unsuccessful attempt to mobilize society and influence the state.”***

prizes for a school's ecological Olympiad or a summer camp, especially if their own children are involved.. Although the Soviet legacy of an atomized society and state-dominated organizations is not a boon to activism, environmentalists are able to reuse networks and survival strategies developed in the Soviet era to further their goals.

Building on state institutions necessitates strategic choices by grassroots environmentalists that may lead them to rule out activism on politically or economically sensitive issues. Grassroots groups tend to operate below the radar of government officials, to cooperate with government officials at the lowest levels, or to organize events that are perceived as innocuous or beneficial by the local community. Their unregistered status and low income provides some protection from the attention of tax agencies and security services. Some grassroots activists are even employed as state bureaucrats in the regional offices of the State Committee for Ecology in regions where environmental issues have not been politicized and local grassroots groups are not perceived as adversarial.<sup>39</sup>

The distinction between grassroots groups and professionalized groups should not be exaggerated. Many, although not all, grassroots groups aspire to become more organizationally developed professionalized groups. This aspiration is based in part on the fact that the Western NGO model has come to signify acceptance by the international community as well as greater professional success and personal income. In spite of their low level of organizational development, grassroots groups contribute to Russia's civil society. The issues prompting their activism are linked to demand from the local population and are therefore more likely to encourage participation and to attract the support of the local government. Small groups are more likely to provide solidary benefits for the average participant. Although the type of participation encouraged at the grassroots may not be overtly political, the issues tackled reaffirm the mutual rights and responsibilities of local government and citizens and engage those who are reluctant to

oppose the authorities directly. Even groups that do not make demands on the government may encourage Russians to enter the public sphere, interact with their fellow citizens, and provide a basis for future cooperation. Grassroots groups offer lessons in efficacy at an individual level and are a source of democratization in existing local institutions.

### **Recent Challenges for Russia's Environmentalists**

Several recent disputes between professionalized environmentalists and officials at the federal level illustrate their somewhat antagonistic relations with the government and the difficulty they have countering government hostility because of their relatively weak societal support. The disputes include the trials of Nikitin and Pasko, the loss of the main government body for environmental oversight, and the government's decision to allow the import of nuclear waste into Russia. They also illuminate why the current political environment discourages more risk-averse environmentalists at the grassroots level from increasing the scope of their activities.

During the past few years environmental organizations—particularly those receiving foreign grants—have been the subjects of apparently random harassment through audits by the tax police and investigations by the Federal Security Service (FSB). Several high-profile environmentalists have been charged with treason for publicizing their concerns about environmental damage perpetrated by the military. Aleksandr Nikitin is a former Russian naval officer who was charged with espionage and disclosure of state secrets in connection with a report he wrote on the risks of radioactive pollution from Russia's Northern Fleet while working for the Norwegian environmental organization Bellona in 1996. The report that called the leaks from military submarines' nuclear reactors "a Chernobyl in slow motion." Nikitin defended himself against the espionage charges by asserting that all of the information in his reports had come from public sources. In August 2000, after a string of legal battles, Nikitin finally was acquitted when the court ruled that the laws under which he had been charged were applied retroactively. Grigori Pasko was charged in a similar legal suit after revealing information to a Japanese television crew about nuclear waste dumping by Russia's decaying Pacific Fleet. Pasko was convicted of espionage in December 2001 and sentenced to four years imprisonment. His lawyer charged that the verdict had been made under pressure from the FSB.<sup>40</sup> Those cases are the most high-profile moves in the Russian government's anti-environmental campaign, in which green NGOs are accused of acting on behalf of Western interests. Commenting on relations between environmental NGOs and the FSB, Nikitin told the press, "There are no real spies, so in order to show [the FSB's] significance, they go after people involved in areas such as the environment."<sup>41</sup> A St. Petersburg activist who also receives Western funding admits that the greens' direct employment by Western organizations and reliance on Western funding make them vulnerable and are responsible for the lack of popular support for Nikitin and Pasko.<sup>42</sup>

Opportunities for environmentalists to participate in the policymaking process further diminished when, in May 2000, President Putin ordered the dissolution



of both the State Committee on the Environment and the State Forestry Committee and passed their environmental oversight functions to the Natural Resources Ministry, the agency in charge of licensing mining, oil exploration, and timber extraction.<sup>43</sup> Although the State Committee on the Environment had been unpopular with environmentalists for what they deemed its lax enforcement of environmental protection legislation,<sup>44</sup> Russian activists rallied to have the Committee reinstated, claiming that a flawed system of environmental protection was better than none at all. Protests by Russian environmentalists and their colleagues from the transnational environmental community were not enough to reverse this decision. Environmentalists had some difficulty publicizing the negative ramifications of the decision. For example, a poll taken in four Siberian cities in early 2001 found that 63 percent of respondents were unaware that the president had abolished the State Committee for Environmental Protection.<sup>45</sup> For environmental organizations, the loss of these committees represents the loss of a formal institution that could be used rhetorically and practically as a potential source of future environmental protection.

Environmentalists' failed campaign against importing nuclear waste into Russia also illustrates their largely unsuccessful attempt to mobilize society and influence the state. In summer 2000 the government proposed legislation allowing Russia to import 21,000 tons of radioactive waste for reprocessing and storage, for which the country to earn approximately \$20 billion over ten years. Environmentalists successfully publicized the potential negative environmental and health effects of this plan. Public opinion was clearly on their side: polls showed that the plan was opposed by more than 93 percent of Russians.<sup>46</sup> Environmental organizations campaigned for a national referendum on the issue, thereby exploiting one of the few legal avenues available to them for participating in policy making.<sup>47</sup> In response to the referendum initiative, government officials expressed skepticism about the significance of public preferences. Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov derided the idea of citizen input by means of a referendum, arguing "Such a vote could only be an emotional decision."<sup>48</sup> NGOs' efforts were also met with allegations of espionage. Duma deputy Anatoly Lukyanov charged that anyone opposing the nuclear waste bill must be an "American agent."<sup>49</sup> And Pyotr Romanov, a Duma deputy chairman asserted, "It isn't hard to understand that the current 'environmental campaign' against the Nuclear Energy Ministry . . . [is] organized in the West and directed from the West. The West does not want Russia in this particular market; it wants high-tech development in Russia to end."<sup>50</sup>

In spite of these charges, a coalition of environmental organizations successfully gathered almost 2.5 million signatures in support of a referendum—unprecedented public support for an environmental issue in the post-Soviet period.<sup>51</sup> However, the Central Election Commission ruled that only 1,873,000 signatures were authentic, causing the campaign to fall short of the two million signatures required. While the petition drive was tremendously successful in demonstrating public opposition to the plan, environmentalists had difficulty translating willingness to sign a petition into other forms of protest when the ref-

erendum failed and the legislation was passed. For example, Greenpeace expected hundreds of thousands of protesters at candlelight vigil after Putin signed the nuclear waste importation law, yet only approximately 200 people actually attended.<sup>52</sup> Many inside and outside the movement suspected the Central Election Commission of bowing to official pressure to derail the referendum. Environmentalists vowed to pursue the issue in court.

The government's increasing efforts to repress the movement and violation of activists' civil liberties have led many environmentalists to argue publicly that they are struggling not only on behalf the environment, but for democracy as well, as evidenced by the Electoral Commission's ruling against the referendum petition. Vladimir Sliviyak, co-chairman of the Russian organization Ecodefence stated, "[The referendum] is not just a fight against nuclear waste import, but a fight for establishing democracy and strong civil society in Russia."<sup>53</sup>

### Conclusion

The events of the past decade demonstrate the difficulty of creating civil society "from above" using external funding. While the persistence and even growth of environmentalism in Russia is a major achievement given the country's political and economic instability, the Western organizational model has not been able to live up to foreign donors' hopes. Grant programs have supported many professionalized organizations but also make it possible for them to maintain an elite orientation and weak ties with society. As one foreign donor noted, Russian organizations modeled on Western NGOs have developed an ivory tower of activism.<sup>54</sup> A Siberian NGO resource center administrator concluded, "We [are] building strong organizations, but they work in a vacuum."<sup>55</sup> That "vacuum," I would argue, is a symbol of the organizations' weak relationships with state and societal actors. The vacuum also makes it difficult to assess accurately the relative strength of Russia's environmental organizations and to predict their future role.

Both professionalized and grassroots environmental groups have strengths and limitations in terms of contributing to civil society development in contemporary Russia. Professionalized organizations use their independence from domestic financing to tackle sensitive political issues, demand a seat at the table, and monitor the government. Yet in the current political climate their strategies have led to government repression and they have been unable to muster societal support to buttress their claims to represent the public interest. Grassroots groups offer the opportunity of public participation and lay the groundwork for future activism but are generally weak and apolitical. The professionalized groups fostered by Western grant programs, which have the greatest organizational resemblance to Western civil societies, may not be the most effective at mobilizing the population and influencing the state in contemporary Russia. We need to broaden our view to include other types of citizen mobilization and rethink our preferences for professionalism in every case. Including grassroots environmental groups in our analysis suggests that methods of evaluating civil society development could profitably be revised to broaden the definitions of both environmentalism and participation.

In the future, professionalized and grassroots environmental groups may be able to find ways to work together in mutually supportive networks. As foreign grant funding diminishes, professionalized groups may learn to cultivate sources of domestic support and closer ties to their grassroots counterparts. The Putin administration may shift course and create a more hospitable environment for activism, allowing grassroots groups to intensify their activities. For now, however, the two types of environmental organizations pursue different goals and employ different survival strategies suitable to their opportunities and constraints. Currently, the primary obstacle to generating greater public participation and further developing civil society is the environmentalists' weak ties to the Russian citizenry. The lack of societal embeddedness makes it unlikely that professionalized environmental organizations will find much-needed local resources when grant funding diminishes, will be viewed favorably by the public, and will become an integral part of policymaking, even at a local level. The weak connections to the population are also a source of pessimism about the development of civil society in Russia today. To the extent that Russia's most visible environmental leaders have allowed ties to local constituencies and grassroots groups to languish in favor of devoting time and energy to transnational linkages, the movement appears likely to remain a domain reserved for the elite.

#### NOTES

1. Both categories of Russian environmental groups accurately could be labeled "non-governmental organizations" (NGOs). However, in this article I use the term NGO only to refer to Western environmental organizations and the model of organizational development that they promote. For a thorough discussion of the difficulties in defining the term "NGO," see two works by Lester M. Salamon and Helmut K. Anheier, *The Emerging Nonprofit Sector: An Overview* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996) and *Defining the Nonprofit Sector: A Cross-National Analysis* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997); also Anna C. Vakil, "Confronting the Classification Problem: Toward a Taxonomy of NGOs," *World Development* 25, no. 12 (1997): 2057–70. I do not include a discussion of Russia's green parties. The most successful green political party, KEDR, generally is seen by environmentalists as a top-down effort by some government officials to use the language of environmentalism to win voters, but has few links to the broader movement. The numerous other small green parties scattered around Russia have splintered because of ideological differences and leadership disputes. (St. Petersburg alone has five green parties.) None of the green parties experienced much electoral success, even at the local level, and operate more as discussion groups for politically and environmentally minded intellectuals.

2. For an assessment of the relationship between foreign donors and environmental NGOs, see Leslie Powell, "Evaluating Strategies: Foreign Foundations and Russian Environmental NGOs," report prepared for the Columbia University Project on Evaluating Western NGO Strategies for Democratization and the Reduction of Ethnic Conflict in the Former Communist States, 2000. For an overview of foreign assistance and post-communist NGO development, see Sarah E. Mendelson and John K. Glenn, *Democracy Assistance and NGO Strategies in Post-Communist Societies* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Democracy and Rule of Law Project Working Paper no. 8, February 2000).

3. Jane Dawson, *Eco-Nationalism: Anti-Nuclear Activism and National Identity in Russia, Lithuania, and Ukraine* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996); Oleg Yanitskii, *Ekologicheskoe Dvizhenie Rossii: Kriticheskii Analiz [The Environmental Movement of Russia: A Critical Analysis]* (Moscow: Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Sociology, 1996); Glenys A. Babcock, "The Role of Public Interest Groups in Democratization: Soviet Environmental Groups and Energy Policy-Making, 1985-1991" (Rand Graduate School, Doctoral Dissertation, 1997).

4. Douglas R. Weiner, *A Little Corner of Freedom: Russian Nature Protection from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

5. Dawson, *Eco-Nationalism*, 6-7.

6. East European dissidents, in particular, were quite optimistic about the ability of civic activism to further democratize and transform political and economic systems. See various works by Adam Michnik, Vaclav Havel, Mihaly Vajda, and Georg Konrad.

7. Thomas Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999), 211-14; Marina Ottaway and Thomas Carothers, eds., *Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000).

8. Susan Reichele, USAID-Moscow, author interview, Moscow, 21 April 2000. The Charities Aid Foundation Russia Annual Review 1998/99, 6, estimates that as of January 1999 there were 286,000 NGOs in Russia. In her introductory remarks at the recent Kremlin-sponsored Civic Forum, Liudmila Alekseeva, leader of the Moscow Helsinki Group noted that forum attendees represented more than 350,000 non-governmental organizations (see Andrei Zolotov, "Civic Activists Storm the Kremlin," *Moscow Times*, 22 November 2001). For another estimate of the NGO population in Russia, see "Civic Initiatives Program: Executive Summary" (Novosibirsk: Siberian Civic Initiatives Support Center), 21, available through the World Learning office in Moscow. The CIP summary notes that only 15-20 percent of that number may be active. The exact number of social organizations also is difficult to capture because many groups operate without legal registration.

9. The estimate of 6 percent is plausible, although it may too low (Charities Aid Foundation Russia Annual Review 1998/99, Moscow). Many surveys of social organizations ask representatives to select only one issue area on which they work and this may lead to undercounting. Also, if unregistered groups are included in surveys, the number of environmental organizations tends to be higher. In Novosibirsk, environmental groups constituted 4.2 percent of the surveyed NGO population (*Obshchestvennye Ob"edineniia Sibirskogo Regiona: Novosibirskaia Oblast'*, Sibirskii Tsentri Podderzhki Obshchestvennykh Initsiativ, 1998). Yet in St. Petersburg environmental groups composed an estimated 20 percent of the NGOs (*Spravochnik Proektov i Programm*, TACIS, 1995). In Primorskii Krai, in a survey in which groups were allowed to choose several issue areas, 43 percent of NGOs noted some environmental component to their activities (*Obshchestvennye Ob"edineniia Dal'nego Vostoka: Informatsionnyi Spravochnik*, ISAR-Dal'nii Vostok and USAID, 1998).

10. Yuri Shirokov, ISAR-Siberia, author interview, Novosibirsk, 2 December 1999.

11. Anna Kouzmina and Oleg Yanitskii, "Interpersonal networks of Russian Greens" in *Towards a Sustainable Future: Environmental Activism in Russia and the United States. Selected Readings*, Maria Tysiachniouk and George W. McCarthy, eds. (St. Petersburg: Institute of Chemistry of St. Petersburg State University, 1999), 173-90, especially 180.

12. John Ehrenberg, *Civil Society: The Critical History of an Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); Chris Hann and Elizabeth Dunn, eds., *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models*, (London: Routledge, 1996).

13. Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 7-9.

14. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Vintage Classics/Ran-

dom House, 1990 [1945]).

15. Robert D. Putnam, with Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Y. Nanetti, *Making Democracy Work* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 171–74.

16. See Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad*; Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition*; Larry Diamond, *The Democratic Revolution: Struggles for Freedom and Pluralism in the Developing World* (New York: Freedom House, 1991); Alison Van Rooy, ed., *Civil Society and the Aid Industry* (London: Earthscan Publications, Ltd., 1998); Phillippe C. Schmitter, “Civil Society East and West” in *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies: Themes and Perspectives*, Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, Yun-han Chu, and Hung-mao Tien, eds. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 239–62.

17. Laura A. Henry, “Social Movements, Transnational Actors, and Democratization: The Case of Russian Environmental Movement,” in *The Paradoxes of Progress: Globalization and Post-Socialist Cultures*, Rachael Stryker and Jennifer Patico, eds., *Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers*, 2001, no. 86, 69–92; Valerie Sperling, *Organizing Women in Contemporary Russia: Engendering Transition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and Pauline Jones Luong and Erika Weinthal, “The NGO Paradox: Democratic Goals and Non-Democratic Outcomes in Kazakhstan” *Europe-Asia Studies* 5, no. 7 (1999), 1267–84.

18. The distinction between professionalized and grassroots groups includes patterns of behavior, survival strategies, and issues addressed. There are many organizations that fall into a gray area: professionalized groups that are unsuccessful grant seekers and lose their external resource base or grassroots groups that aspire to a more developed organizational form, but have yet to find financial support. In general, however, the professionalized-grassroots divide effectively illustrates different patterns of relations between the environmentalists and state and societal actors.

19. Most professionalized environmental groups are registered according to the 1995 Law “On social associations” and the 1996 Law “On non-commercial organizations.”

20. For a more detailed discussion of political opportunity structure, see Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action, and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) and Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Sperling, *Organizing Women*, applies this concept to the Russian women’s movement.

21. For example, during the course of my research in 1999–2000, the city of Vladimir received very little foreign assistance and did not have any professionalized environmental organizations. In Briansk the issue of the lingering effect of the Chernobyl disaster attracted some funding for environmental projects and membership of environmental organizations was almost evenly split between grassroots and professionalized. In Vladivostok issues such as the taiga forests, the Siberian tiger, and pollution from the Russian Pacific fleet attracted considerable funding. Professionalized groups made up 70 percent of the city’s environmental organizations. For a more detailed discussion of this topic, see Henry, “Innovating Environmentalism,” paper to be presented at the 2002 American Political Science Association meeting, Boston, MA, forthcoming.

22. Some of the organizations maintain institutional affiliations, although these ties do not imply dues paying membership. Greenpeace is one of the few environmental organizations with thousands of members in Russia, although it is not clear how many of the members pay membership fees or to what degree they can be mobilized beyond enrolling as members.

23. L. Luneva, “Obshchestvennoe Dvizhenie ili Tretii Sektor?” [Social Movement or Third Sector?], *Biulleten’ Moskovskogo ISAR* 7 (Fall-Winter 1998): 24–25.

24. USAID estimates that it has trained more than 13,500 Russian activists working on many diverse issues. As one observer noted, training can be seen as a “tax” that NGOs pay for receiving grant money. See Marta Bruno, “Playing the Cooperation Game: Strategies around International Aid in Post-Socialist Russia,” in *Surviving post-socialism: Local*

*strategies and regional responses in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union*, Sue Bridger and Frances Pine, eds., (London: Routledge, 1998), 170–87.

25. The characteristics of a professional nongovernmental organization can be extrapolated from donor targets for organizational development. For example, the USAID 1999 NGO Sustainability Index (10-11, 16) lists the following characteristics of increased “organizational capacity”: a core of professional leaders and trainers, well-developed missions, a board of directors and staff with a clear division between the two, organizational roles not just personalities, financial management structures, fundraising ability, and familiarity and conformity with legal and tax issues.

26. Many donor reports emphasize the importance of training and use training statistics to measure progress. See, for example, World Learning’s “Partnership Across Borders,” 20–25. For a discussion for the difficulty evaluating foreign assistance, see Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad*, 281–302.

27. For example, groups that have followed this path include ISAR-RFE in Vladivostok, Amur-Batiushka in Blagoveschensk, and the Center for Ecological Awareness in Yakutsk.

28. Institute of Natural Resources Management, “Draft Evaluation of the impact made by the USAID/Moscow assistance program on environmental activism and non-government organizations (NGOs),” P.O. 118-O-00-9700172, (1997), 20.

29. Representative from Viola, author interview, Briansk, 28 April 2000.

30. Leader of defunct environmental organization, author interview, Vladivostok, 4 November 1999.

31. “Obshchestvennyye organizatsii v Rossii,” FOM, 28 June 2001, <http://www.fom.ru/virtual/body>.

32. For a review of government harassment toward NGOs involved in the re-registration process, see Yelena Grishina and Yuri Dzhibladze, “Report: On the Violations Committed in the Course of Registration and Re-Registration on Public Associations in the Russian Federation in 1999” (Moscow: Information Center of the Human Rights Movement and Center for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights, 15 February 2000).

33. Putin was quoted as stating that “foreign secret service organizations use not only diplomatic cover but very actively use all sorts of ecological and public organizations” in *Komsomolskaia Pravda* in July 1999 (RFE/RL Newline, 20 July 1999). In March 2000 an obscure “anti-terrorism commission” threatened to close the Greenpeace office in Moscow (RFE/RL Newline, 3 March 2000). Organizations such as Green World of Lomonosov and Sakhalin Environmental Watch are among those that have reported harassment by the tax police or FSB (See *Baltic News*, 22 February 2000, <<http://www.greenworld.org.ru/eng/gwnews/bn/bngw053.htm>>, and Anatoli Medetsky, “Sakhalin Prosecutors Audit Greens,” *Vladivostok News*, 3 March 2000.).

34. Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

35. “Problemy Ekologii,” FOM, 22 November 2001, <<http://www.fom.ru/reports/frames/short/d014406.htm>>.

36. Karen Widess, TACIS, author interview, Moscow, 20 April 2000.

37. Twenty percent of groups in the Russian Far East are unregistered according to a 1998 survey sponsored by ISAR. Numbers are available through the ISAR-RFE NGO database.

38. The American organizations ISAR and Pacific Environment (formerly known as PERC) have been among the most effective at administering small grant programs for grassroots environmental organizations.

39. This is the case in both Vladimir and Briansk where government officials have started their own grassroots environmental groups, often informally using the infrastructure of the Committee offices.

40. RFE/RL Newline, 28 December 2001.
41. Sarah Karush, "Ecologists Wary of Putin in New Post," *Moscow Times*, 14 August 1999.
42. Valentin Yemelin, TACIS Environmental Awareness Program, author interview, St. Petersburg, 5 April 1999.
43. Presidential Decree No. 867. Igor Chestin, head of the Russian office of the World Wide Fund for Nature, commented that this move "is like putting a goat in charge of the cabbage patch."
44. The committee has been called a "Potemkin village of environmental aspirations." See D. J. Peterson and Eric K. Bielke, "The Reorganization of Russia's Environmental Bureaucracy: Implications and Prospects," *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics* 42, no. 1 (2001): 65-76, especially 69.
45. Nadezhda L. Kutepova, "Public Opinion Surveys Help Counter Pro-Nuclear Misinformation," *Give and Take*, ISAR (Spring/Summer 2001).
46. "Russia Denies Referendum on Nuclear Waste Import," Reuters News Service, 29 November 2000.
47. Russian law allows a citizen-initiated referendum if a registered group collects at least two million signatures within two months.
48. Galina Stolyarova, "Nuclear Waste Referendum Progresses," *St. Petersburg Times*, 24 October 2000.
49. Pavel Felgenhauer, "Why Russia Wants Waste," *Moscow Times*, 4 January 2001.
50. Vladimir Kucherenko, "A Nuclear Portfolio for the New Minister," *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 5 April 2001, quoted in *REDfiles* 3, no. 14, 2-8 April 2001.
51. This number is even more impressive because signing a petition for referendum requires each individual to give his or her passport information, including address.
52. "Candles in Red Square in Nuclear Waste Protest," Agence France Presse, 13 July 2001.
53. Paul Brown, "US backs plan for Russia to import nuclear waste," *The Guardian*, 19 February 2001.
54. Representative of the Mott Foundation, author interview, Moscow, 19 May 2000.
55. Anatoli Zabolotnyi, Siberian Civic Initiative Support Center, author interview, Novosibirsk, 3 December 1999.