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Article:

Environmental Protest in New Zealand (1997-2010)

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Protest actions are an important indicator of public concern, raising awareness and highlighting perceived failings in administrative practices. With increasing prominence of environmental challenges there has been a move for states to incorporate stakeholders, potentially reducing the need for such confrontational actions. This article uses protest event analysis and case comparison to examine the scale and character of environmental protest actions in New Zealand from 1997-2010. This period was one of relative socio-economic stability, coupled with growing awareness of environmental challenges. The article considers the relative level of action of grassroots groups and more formalised NGOs, asking which issues generated protest actions and which factors contributed to environmental campaign outcomes. The findings suggest that, although protest actions can strengthen campaigns, the outcomes ultimately remain heavily dependent on the priorities of the state.

Introduction

On 5 May 2010, 50,000 people marched through the centre of Auckland to protest government plans to open sections of the national parks for mining (*New Zealand Press Association* 2010a). The march was the culmination of a campaign by the main national environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) opposing the expansion of mining. In the face of demonstrated public opposition the government was forced to abandon plans to allow mining in protected areas (*New Zealand Press Association* 2010b). The scale of the protest demonstrated the level of concern regarding the government's plans, echoing the campaign against raising the level of Lake Manapouri in the late 1960s and early 1970s, upon which the modern environmental movement in New Zealand was founded (Mark et al 2001). Protests of this size and scale are relatively rare in New Zealand, raising questions about the broader character of environmental protest actions. Of particular interest are the extent of campaigns incorporating protest actions, factors determining their instigation, and contributors to their success or failure.

There is an understanding in modern democratic states, including New Zealand, that environmental advocacy has become increasingly institutionalised and professional in character (see van der Heijden 1999). Rather than confront the state, environmental NGOs seek to lobby or work directly with the state's administrative bodies to affect change. Increasing access results in a less prominent role for protest, as environmental issues increasingly enter the mainstream political agenda. The introduction of the mixed member proportional (MMP) voting system and the subsequent entry of the Green Party into Parliament further strengthens the case that environmental issues have become increasingly mainstream in New Zealand (Bale 2002; Carroll et al 2009). However, this does not preclude the opportunity to undertake protest actions,

as Goldstone (2003: 9) notes, 'Protest actions have certain advantages over and complementarities with conventional political action that make protest both an alternative and a valuable supplement to the latter.' Access to the institutions of the state also determines the range of possible actions, with localised grassroots groups relying more on protest actions in the absence of established connections. Therefore, consideration must be given to the level of protest and the role of the larger, professionalised NGOs in supporting or participating in such actions. The anti-mining campaign illustrates that unconventional actions remain within the broad repertoire of the environmental movement. The contexts within which these apparently infrequent actions take place require further examination.

Using protest event analysis methodology, this paper maps environmentally focused protests from 1997-2010 that were reported in the major national newspapers. In addition, two significant campaigns that occurred during this time period are examined in greater detail: the campaign against logging of native forests, and that against lifting the moratorium on Genetic Engineering (GE) field trials. The aims of the analysis are to: (1) consider the level of protest undertaken by grassroots groups and formal NGOs respectively, (2) determine which issues generated protest actions and in what form, and (3) identify factors contributing to success or failure of broader environmental campaigns. First, the paper examines the literature on environmental social movements, the role played by protest action in their broader repertoire, and the role of political context in shaping decisions of movement actors and outcomes that result. Following this, the key features of the protest event analysis methodology adopted in this paper will be outlined. In the third section, the data on New Zealand environmental protests over the 1997-2010 period is presented, quantifying the level

of protest and identifying emergent patterns. The fourth section examines the wider

campaigns against native forest logging and GE regulation through an examination of

the role protest actions played in the campaigns. The final section considers the

implications of the findings from the protest event analysis and the case analyses, in

the context of the core aims of the paper.

Environmental Movements and Political Context

Social movements are complex, multifaceted networks that seek to enlarge the public

agenda to include issues considered to be neglected. Understanding social movements

requires an examination of the reasons for their emergence and ways in which they

are shaped by their surroundings. Offe (1985: 820) argues that social movements

adopt 'practices that belong to an intermediate sphere between "private" pursuits and

concerns… and institutional, state-sanctioned modes of politics'. This position allows

social movement actors a degree of freedom, as they are less constrained by formal

institutional rules and regulations. On the other hand this position may limit their

effectiveness, as social movement actors remain outside the decision-making

structures they seek to influence. Although independent of the state, social

movements are not free of its influence, with Gale (1986) noting that social

movements must deal with organised opponents and state intervention. These features

define social movements and their sphere of operation; context shapes the perceived

need as well as success or failure.

The desire to remain independent and yet challenge the status quo presents a dilemma

to social movements. Seeking to address perceived problems can bring social

movement actors into conflict with established groups and entrenched interests

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(Dalton et al 2003). For this reason, protest forms an important tool in the repertoire of the social movement emphasising, 'the principled and nonnegotiable nature of concerns, which can be seen as a virtue as well as something necessitated by the relatively primitive organizational structures involved.' (Offe 1985: 830) Alongside these more confrontational strategies, social movements also rely on less contentious forms of political activity, such as lobbying, voting, and consulting with the state. The benefit of protest action is that it 'draws public attention to environmental causes that would not occur through normal political processes.' (Dalton et al 2003: 744) Social movements therefore require fluidity, navigating between competing pressures within their surroundings and while making use of formal and informal channels of influence to maximise their impact.

Within the broader environmental movement the key differences between actors derive from scale and method. When considering issues of scale a distinction can be drawn between grassroots groups and NGOs. NGOs tend to are classified as established organisations that are relatively well-resourced. Grassroots groups have much greater variability in structure and longevity, relying on volunteers, and are generally issue-based in nature (Mercer 2002). When considering the consolidation of formal NGO structures, van der Heijden (1999: 201) argues that:

> a process of deradicalisation, oligarchisation, institutionalisation and professionalization began [in the 1980s], manifesting itself in a tremendous growth of membership numbers in organisations at the national level, as well as in a change from active participation to 'chequebook activism.'

The emergence of formalised NGO structures also saw greater engagement with agencies of the state, limiting opportunities to pursue claims outside the agreed

framework. In terms of method, grassroots groups maintain some degree of independence, as they lack this formalised access. In addition to these two types of groups there are also 'radical, highly committed ecology groups' (Kousis 2004: 397) that operate on the fringes of the environmental movement. Taylor (2008: 27) notes that:

> Radical environmentalism most commonly brings to mind the actions of those who break laws in dramatic displays of 'direct action' in defense of nature…[and that] The most decisive perception animating radical environmentalism…is that the earth and all life is sacred and worthy of passionate defense.

Radical groups in this vein, such as Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front, have emerged in reaction to the perceived failings of mainstream groups (Taylor 2008). The use of environmentally motivated sabotage ('ecotage') has led to increasing pressure being placed on such groups in a time of heightened concern around terrorism (Vanderheiden 2008).[1]

Methods adopted by the environmental movement vary significantly, but a distinction can be made between engagement and activism. The growth in awareness and concern over environmental issues has provided opportunities for members of the environmental movement to engage directly with the state. However, the effectiveness of this participation in shaping outcomes continues to be determined by the political and economic priorities of the state (Downes 2000; Todt 1999). This has led to an argument for a 'dual strategy', with organisations combining participation and engagement with activism (Dryzek 1996). Considering the role of social movements, Goldstone (2003: 8) argues:

> Social movement activity and conventional political activity are different but parallel approaches to influencing political outcomes, often drawing on the same actors, targeting the same bodies, and seeking the same goals.

Although engagement and protest are not mutually exclusive, the trend towards professionalisation can lead to lower levels of protest in exchange for access. By contrast, grassroots groups are often obliged to adopt confrontation or spectacle to be noticed, as they do not have the same access and relationships with actors within the state (Kousis et al 2008). These divisions in scale and method therefore indicate distinct parts of the broader environmental movement, with an expectation that local and less formal groups will be more likely to undertake unconventional actions than more established organisations.

Changes in the external social, political, or economic context present challenges and opportunities for movement groups. The entrance of new allies or opponents and increased salience of targeted issues resulting from external events can strengthen or weaken the impact of the movement. Gale (1986) notes that the field is never static and in particular the emergence of countermovement actors can threaten the ability of social movements to advance their claims, by complicating the issue and providing support for the target of claims. In this manner social movement organisations must be ready to adapt to change in the external environment in order to maximise the benefits and minimise risks associated with action (McAdam and Scott 2005). In the context of environmental politics, the challenge is to overcome entrenched attitudes regarding the costs of environmental action both actual and in terms of missed opportunities. As Kousis (2004: 396-97) has argued:

> Since environmental issues raise significant economic considerations in environmental contentious politics, the responses of the state act as economic opportunities or constraints for the movement's development.

The shift to a more inclusive policy making environment may also close down opportunities for contentious politics, as issues are depoliticised and opponents are brought together (Dryzek et al 2003).

The New Zealand environmental movement in its modern form[2] coalesced in response to the plan to raise the level of Lake Manapouri for hydroelectric power generation in the 1960s (Mark et al 2001). Mills (2008: 684) notes that the plan 'generated widespread protest in the late 60s and early 70s over its potential environmental effects, and the secret and suspect government motives behind it.' From this initial base the movement developed during the 1970s around opposition to the logging of native forests, seeing the formation of grassroots organisations such as the Native Forests Action Council (NFAC), as well as local branches of Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth (Barnes and Hayter 2005; Downes 2000). During the 1980s the movement was relatively strong, coming out of an active decade and facing a government pushing through reforms streamlining the state administration, including the creation of environmentally focused agencies (Wheen 2002). During the 1990s and 2000s the movement was weakened, faced with limited government action on the environment, tensions within the movement, and declining overall membership as the state sought to depoliticise environmental issues (see Buhrs 2003).

At the core of the contemporary environmental movement in New Zealand are four national NGOs: Greenpeace, Environmental Defense Society, World Wildlife Fund,

and the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society. These groups have access to the state and have developed positions as respected and legitimate representatives of the environmental movement. With the exception of Greenpeace, their activities are primarily focused on their formal connections with the state. There are a significant number of smaller local issue-based grassroots groups that emerge to address a wide range of environmental concerns. The access of these groups to state agencies is far more limited. This position as 'outsiders' may also mean that they are more likely to engage in protest actions, to raise public awareness around issues of concern. Previous research (Garavan 2007; Kousis 1999) has shown the importance of local protest in getting issues of environmental concern onto the agenda given the focus on a limited range of issues and proximity to the point of concern, providing for a more clear cut focus. Local protest in New Zealand is also encouraged by the devolution of many planning and environmental responsibilities, coupled with an absence of national guidelines (Wheen 2002). Before examining the character of environmental protest, methodological issues relating to the use of protest event analysis will be considered.

Methodology

The research reported in this article combines a protest event analysis of environmentally focused contention over the 1997-2010 period with an examination of two case studies of significant environmental campaigns that occurred during this time. Koopmans and Rucht (2002: 231) argue that:

> protest event analysis (PEA) has been developed to systematically map, analyze, and
>
> interpret the occurrence and properties of large numbers of protests….[providing]

> solid empirical ground for observing protest activities in large geographical areas
>
> over considerable spans of time

In this way protest event analysis can be seen as providing an overview of the scale of contention, which allows for more focused analysis of specific events and campaigns. The use of content analysis allows data collection to be tailored to capture the level of contention in specific fields, as well as pointing to changes in the nature and character of such actions (Fillieule and Jiménez 2003).

This article draws on an original dataset of environmentally focused protest events in New Zealand over the period 1997-2010. Data was obtained from media accounts of protest events recorded in the electronic archives (searched using Factiva) of three national daily newspapers (*New Zealand Herald; Dominion-Post;*[3] *The Press*), the main Sunday newspaper (*Sunday Star-Times*) and the national news agency (*New Zealand Press Association*). Search criteria were designed to maximise the number of relevant stories returned while limiting spurious matches. A search of the sources noted above was conducted using the terms '*environment**' and '*protest**' to capture variations on the two key terms.[4] To validate the search terms, sample searches were conducted using the term '*environment**' with each of '*protest**', 'rally*', 'march*', 'occup*', 'mobilis*', or 'demonstrat*' for the years 1997, 2004, and 2010. This validation returned only one additional story that was not captured using the chosen search terms. The search returned 4746 stories containing the two terms and 206 distinct events over the 1997-2010 period. Each story returned was read by the author with those identifying environmental protest events being marked for closer reading and coding.

For each event identified information was recorded on: date, geographical location, physical setting, level of issue (local, national, international), issue group, identified target of claim, action (up to four recorded), presence of counter action/protest, numbers involved, grassroots or NGO, identified participant group (up to two), police numbers, arrests, response, description of event, and source. These categories allowed a detailed picture of environmental protest actions to be developed to inform the analysis. Where there was overlap within the categories, for example where more than one issue was at stake, the primary focus of the protest action was identified and coded. The 'issue group' was determined by considering the range of protest actions and developing broader categories that captured the range of issues generating protests.

Newspaper reports invariably provide only a subset of protest actions, with reporting practices and editorial policy determining which issues are reported and how they are reported.[5] There is also a noted bias in national newspapers to underreport local events, unless they are linked to a larger news story.[6] Despite these limitations the use of newspaper reports of protest remains an important source for such analysis, as Rootes (2003, 16) argues:

> We cannot hope, even by the most sophisticated analysis of data derived from media reports, closely to approach an unmediated record of events, but we can reasonably hope to give as comprehensive and balanced account of events as it is possible to assemble from public sources.

The use of electronic archives also presents challenges, as it may not yield the same result as reading and coding whole print editions if events have been reported in a manner that is not captured by the search terms.[7] These limitations are acknowledged,

but the variation from manual searching is expected to be limited due to the increased

sophistication of database search tools. With these issues in mind, it is argued that

careful and reflexive use of protest event analysis can nonetheless provide an

important means of understanding the character of protest over a given period.

Environmental Protest Actions in New Zealand (1997-2010): Findings from Protest Event Analysis

Change in the scale of environmental protest actions over time may reflect change in

the political context, the character of the issues at stake, or some combination. Figure

I shows the number of environmental protest events reported over the period in the

newspapers whose digital archives were used. These data show the relative

prominence of grassroots protest actions in relation to those of NGOs.[8] An

examination of the overall number of environmentally focused protest actions in New

Zealand does not reveal a clear pattern in the level of contention. The number of

protest actions fluctuated from a low of eight events in 1998 and 2008 to a high of 24

in 2003, coinciding with the lead-up to the end of the moratorium on GE field trials in

October of that year. The spikes in NGO protest actions in 1999 and 2003 were part

of the broader campaign against GE technology. Further consideration is given to the

anti-GE campaign below, illustrating the importance of such campaigns in shaping

the level of overall protest. A point of note is that protest levels appear to be

independent of the electoral cycle. Protest in election years varied from higher than

average levels in 1999 and 2005, to 2002 and 2008 where levels were relatively low.

[Figure I]

The apparently limited number of events (206) is regarded as representative of the level of environmental protest over the period, given the population size and the character of the state administration. As noted above, there has been a move towards greater incorporation of environmental concerns into the political agenda globally (see van der Heijden, 1999). This trend is reflected in New Zealand, with Buhrs (2003) arguing that the result has been an attempt to depoliticise environmental issues, restricting opportunities to target the state in claim-making. In such a political context the opportunities for protest actions are restricted, as the energies of environmental groups (particularly established NGOs) are redirected towards gaining access rather than publicising issues. Figure I shows an increase in the level of grassroots protest action in 2009, followed in 2010 by an increase in NGO protest actions. This raises an interesting point regarding the relationship between grassroots and NGO protest. The change may represent a reaction to the prioritisation of economic development over environmental protection undertaken by the right of centre National led government elected in November 2008 (Vowles 2009), possibly pointing to the start of a new cycle of environmental contention. The data may therefore indicate that grassroots groups were impacted by and reacted to change sooner than NGOs.[9]

When considering the level of environmental protest it is important to examine the range of issues that generate actions. Table I shows the frequency of grassroots and NGO protest actions across a range of environmental issues (both sources of environmental deterioration and subsequent environmental impacts) over the 1997-2010 period. The data reveal divergence in the issues the grassroots groups and NGOs have focused on, with the issues that animated each representing their respective

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origins. Grassroots groups focused more on issues of conservation and local impact, such as development and pollution. The issues NGOs tackled can be seen as targeting issues that are not so easily resolved, in view of their potential impact on economic performance (climate change and mining), as well as issues of conservation and pollution. One area that was of significant concern to both NGOs and grassroots organisations was that of GE technology. GE features as an important issue during this period because it saw the first applications for field trials and concurrent development of regulations to manage the associated risks, involving public and private sector actors both at the national and local level.

[Table I]

Periodicity is also important in understanding the shifting focus of protest actions. Protests against GE increased significantly from 1999 when concerns were raised about the safety of the technology, before peaking in 2003 and then falling dramatically following the lifting of a moratorium on field trials in October 2003. In contrast, climate change emerged as an issue of protest only in 2005, with only sporadic actions taking place before this time. This may represent the growing awareness of the issue, coupled with frustration with the lack of progress internationally. Alongside these variations protests over conservation, development, and pollution were distributed relatively evenly over the period. The data also demonstrate that NGO protest actions tended to cluster around certain issues, in particular forestry and mining, indicating the existence of campaigns.

[Table II]

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The final aspect of the data to be considered is the protest repertoire and how this has varied across issue, time, and participant type. Table II shows all forms of protest action undertaken during the period under consideration, with up to four actions being listed for each distinct protest event. Demonstrational actions were the most common, with 'gathering' occurring with the greatest frequency for both grassroots groups and NGOs.[10] These gatherings often included the display of banners or placards and were often accompanied by chants and performances. The documented actions of protestors were relatively similar overall, for both grassroots groups and NGOs. There was also limited variation in the form of protest actions used across issue areas. Protests against GE adopted the widest range of actions, while those against waste adopted the narrowest, although this is also a function of the difference in the number of protest actions undertaken for each. The protest repertoire changed little over the period, as would be expected within this relatively short timeframe.[11] The main innovation in action forms was the emergence of activist workshops in 2003, mirroring similar developments elsewhere.[12]

These data indicate that the number of protest actions around environmental issues reported in the newspapers whose digital archives were used has remained relatively steady over the period under consideration. Fluctuations in the level of protest were driven primarily by the emergence of specific challenges, such as campaigns against native forest logging, GE, and mining.

Examining Campaigns Against Native Logging and Genetic Engineering

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Environmental actions in New Zealand have taken a range of forms and operated across multiple levels. An understanding of the nature of these actions requires consideration of how they are located within, and contribute to, broader environmental campaigns. This section examines two significant national campaigns that took place during the 1997-2010 period: against logging native timber, and against the lifting of the moratorium on GE field trials. These campaigns differed in composition, approach, and outcome, thus providing a framework within which to consider the effectiveness of such campaigns. The section explores the extent to which these differences explain the respective outcomes: success in stopping logging, and failure in halting the lifting of the moratorium on GE field trials.

Native Forest Action and Beech Forest Protection (1997-1999)

Protection of native forests in New Zealand has been an important element of the environmental movement since the early 1970s. One of the key groups, the NFAC, was formed in 1975 to oppose the exploitation of native forests (Barnes and Hayter 2005). Actions undertaken by the group involved a mixture of unconventional activities such as tree sitting, and direct appeals to the public and the state. The mobilisation of public opinion was seen most clearly in the Maruia Declaration, which was signed by 341,160 people in 1977 and called for native forest logging to be phased out by 1978 (Tilling 1992; Wright 1980). Despite this show of support the campaign was judged to be a failure, mainly due to the vagueness of its claims and the popularity of the government (Wright 1980). The election of a Labour government in 1984 saw a change, as there was an attempt to reduce the role of the state; this included a reorganisation and streamlining of environmentally focused agencies, separating development and preservation roles (Wheen 2002). To deal with the

contentious issue of logging on the West Coast, the site of the most vociferous and sustained opposition, the government negotiated the West Coast Forest Accord (WCFA) in 1986, incorporating the dual goals of protection and utilisation (Memon and Wilson 2007). Although actors within the environmental movement did not support the WCFA, agreement reduced the salience of the issue and delegitimised the parts of the movement that were opposed (Downes 2000).

This period of relative calm was broken by the decision of Timberlands West Coast Limited (TWCL; a state agency tasked with harvesting native timber) to apply to resurrect the sustained yield of native beech trees in 1996. Although the application did not violate the terms of the WCFA, it 'galvanised an alliance of environmental groups led by the newly formed Native Forest Action, a group of dedicated "deep green" young activists, who demanded immediate termination of logging.' (Memon and Wilson 2007: 755) In pursuing its campaign, Native Forest Action[13] (NFA) relied on direct action and was supported by more moderate groups such as the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society (Gullette 2004). The central element in the campaign was the occupation of Charleston forest in February 1997, which was managed by TWCL (*New Zealand Herald* 1997). This was complemented by protests outside the TWCL offices (*The Christchurch Press* 1997a; *The Dominion* 1998), a wood-processing factory (*The Christchurch Press* 1997a), Parliament (*The Dominion* 1998), and in Christchurch city centre (*The Christchurch Press* 1997b). Further unconventional actions by NFA included unsuccessfully evading police attempts to allow logs to be harvested (*The Christchurch Press* 1997c) and attempting to disrupt log retrieval helicopters (*New Zealand Press Association* 1999a). The use of these highly visible, headlining tactics was important in maintaining the attention of the public and

generating sustained support for an end to native forest logging in the lead up to the

1999 parliamentary elections.

This sustained campaign saw a split within the political establishment, providing an

opportunity for campaign success. The governing National party continued to back

TWCL and gave formal approval for the Beech scheme in 1998 (Memon and Wilson

2007). The opposition Labour party (together with future coalition partners, the Green

and Alliance parties) supported the campaign to end native logging on the West Coast

and 'drafted the conservationist position onto their election platform and declared that

if elected they would end all harvesting of indigenous forests species.' (Gullett 2004:

8) Following the 1999 elections the Labour-Alliance coalition moved to end native

forest logging, setting a date of 2002 (Memon and Wilson 2007).

The campaign against native forest logging demonstrates that the political context was

important in determining the outcome. Lack of clear elite consensus on the issue

allowed the sustained protest campaign to shift public opinion, and ultimately the

position of the incoming government, in the desired direction. The tight focus on

TWCL and the scope of the issue meant that the demands could be met without

challenging the underlying economic interests of the state. Logging of native forests

was a relatively minor economic contributor and was offset somewhat by growing

tourism opportunities in the region (Sampson et al 2007).

Opposition to Genetic Engineering (1998-2003)

In contrast to the history behind action over native forest logging, the campaign against GE emerged rapidly in 1998 and became a major rallying point for environmental activism. As Weaver and Motion (2002: 330) note:

> New Zealand had relatively uncontroversially developing genetic engineering technology, and both government and private organisations had been conducting and promoting genetic engineering experiments on foods and crops. Prior to 1998, such tests were not rigorously monitored and only government research was subject to full public scrutiny.

Regulations covering GE were introduced with the 1996 Hazardous Substances and New Organisms (HSNO) Act, and the Environment Risk Management Agency (ERMA) was created in 1998 to monitor decision-making around GE (Wright and Kurian 2010). Concern around GE technologies emerged with the news that products containing GE were being sold on supermarket shelves and attempts made by a salmon hatchery to cover up deformities resulting from GE practices were publicised (Weaver and Motion 2002). Together, these issues led to the emergence of a first wave of protest in 1999, involving crop destruction (*New Zealand Press Association* 1999b) and protest gatherings (*New Zealand Press Association* 1999c). In response to public concern expressed through protest actions and pressure applied by the Green and Alliance parties, the government imposed a moratorium and established the Royal Commission on Genetic Modification (RCGM) in July 2000 to inform public policy around the continued development and regulation of GE technologies (Henderson 2005; Wright and Kurian 2010).

In July 2001 RCGM recommended, 'New Zealand should "preserve opportunities" and allow medical research and commercial field trials of GE products.' (Weaver 2010: 36) This finding was contrary to the overwhelming majority of submissions that

opposed GE in food and the environment, as well as a 'public survey showing that over 50%...felt that there were disadvantages in using genetic modification' (Henderson 2005: 120). Following the RCGM report, the government announced a continuation of the moratorium for three months while the recommendations were considered. During this time, opponents organised a series of protests involving gatherings across the country (McClean 2001) and novel displays, such as a giant GE-free sandwich (*New Zealand Press Association* 2001), to raise awareness and put pressure on the government. In October the 'moratorium on GE research was extended until 30 October 2003, while regulatory frameworks for the science were developed.' (Weaver 2010: 36) This signalled that the campaign by the anti-GE free groups had been effectively lost, as the government appeared to take the position that 'no potentially lucrative aspect of the 'knowledge economy' should be allowed to pass New Zealand by' (Bale 2003: 142). The view of the government was that New Zealand needed to take advantage of the potential economic benefits offered by GE technology, a view that was also reflected strongly in the media (Rupar 2002).

Protests against GE continued in the period following the announcement that the moratorium would end in October 2003. In addition to established environmental groups, new groups such as Mothers Against Genetic Engineering (MAdGE) emerged. MAdGE undertook a range of high profile actions and focused specifically on encouraging mothers to oppose GE technology in food, adopting a carnivalesque strategy centred on 'creating an emotional space for protest that other anti-GE groups…were unable to occupy.' (Weaver 2010: 37) During September and October 2003 there was an increase in the number of actions taking place in the lead up to the lifting of the GE moratorium, as the groups tried to force the government to make the

moratorium permanent. This activity culminated in a series of marches across the country encompassing almost 20,000 people (including 15,000 in Auckland) on 11 October (*New Zealand Press Association* 2003). Despite the opposition, the moratorium was lifted as planned on 30 October. The end of the moratorium saw the number of actions against GE decline, with sporadic protests occurring at hearings considering field trial applications (Gorman 2008) and direct action involving crop destruction (Easton 2008).

New Zealand Environmental Movement In Action or Inaction?

For the majority of the period under consideration (1999-2008) the country was led by a left-leaning (Labour) government, which had coalition and supply agreements with the Green Party. This arrangement would be expected to lead to greater consideration of environmental issues and engagement with members of the environmental movement. The data show that with the exception of 1999 and 2003, the highest number of unconventional actions (1997, 2009, and 2010) occurred under the right-leaning National government. This may represent the absence of elite allies in government and the need for protest actions to generate external support. The GE case study shows that while the Labour government may have been more predisposed to green issues, economic concerns remained dominant. Environmental protest actions do not appear to coincide with the timing of elections (parliamentary or local body) and instead are focused more on specific issues. This holds true at all levels, with a certain degree of opportunism in the targets of campaigns and actions.

The predominance of actions focused on conservation, pollution, and development undertaken by grassroots groups can be linked to the more immediate nature of these

issues, in both time and proximity. These issues, in particular conservation, also impact less directly on the economic performance of the state, as they tend to target tangible concerns that can generally be addressed with available resources. Further to this, the desire to protect New Zealand's 'clean and green' image (Coyle and Fairweather 2005) leads to a greater level of mobilisation to protect natural assets when they are threatened. Survey research has indicated a high level of support for environmental issues amongst the general public, although this remains tempered by the need to maintain economic performance (Carrol et al 2009). Issues pursued by NGOs tended to more directly challenge the economic base of the state and society and presented less manageable solutions. The cases considered above show that a key factor in the success or failure of the campaigns was the economic weight of the issues involved. Native forest logging was a relatively marginal and declining industry, while GE presented the possibility of significant future financial benefits as an emerging and potentially lucrative technology. The relative complexity and economic impact of issues at the national level also required a broader campaign approach to generate and maintain sufficient pressure to encourage change.

The lower number of recognised groups involved in grassroots protests supports the expectation that actions are easier to mobilise at this level. Rather than needing a formal group to organise opposition, these actions are able to draw more readily on pre-existing social connections. This is in keeping with the argument by Garavan (2007: 852) that 'A grievance concentrated in time and space is more likely to give rise to conflict before spatially and temporally differentiated issues'. The number of actions undertaken by the larger professionalised NGOs was relatively low in contrast (with the qualified exception of Greenpeace), as these groups have preferred to work

through existing institutional channels to pursue their aims. There is some limited

overlap between grassroots groups and NGOs, with the Royal Forest and Bird

Protection Society providing backing for some protests undertaken by grassroots

groups, such as in the campaign against native forest logging. The higher proportion

of locally focused grassroots activism reinforces the challenge in developing

campaigns at the national level that are capable of generating the cohesion necessary

to maintain extended campaigns in dealing with issues lacking simple solutions. The

greater variation in methods adopted by established NGOs, extending to theatricality,

also highlights the more complex nature of the issues being addressed and the need to

raise interest and awareness amongst the general public to bolster chances of success.

The comparison of the two environmental campaigns supports these findings, by

indicating the way in which political priorities played a key role in determining their

relative success or failure. The opposition to GE was sustained over a longer period

and attracted more media attention and participants than the NFA campaign, yet it

failed to achieve its aim. Protests against the logging of native forests were initiated

by the decision of TWCL to seek to expand their operations, thereby undermining the

WCFA and opening the way to protest (the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society

was a signatory to the WCFA and was also involved in the NFA protest from 1997).

The relatively peripheral position of native forest logging in economic and political

terms allowed the then opposition Labour party to use it as a point of difference with

which to challenge the National government. In contrast, the complexity of the GE

issue, specifically the number of actors involved and the potential contribution to the

economic performance of the country, coupled with the desire to remain competitive

internationally, meant that the campaign faced a much more determined institutional

and elite opposition. The empowering of the RCGM and the decision to extend the moratorium until 2003 can be seen as an attempt to weaken and undermine the anti-GE campaign by presenting an image of compromise. By engaging with the environmental movement, the government was able to shift away from the clear divisions seen in the campaign against native forest logging. These two cases demonstrate that, although protest can be important in raising issues of concern, the political context is key in determining the chances of ultimate success or failure of environmental campaigns.

Conclusion

The level of environmental protest reported in the media in New Zealand remained relatively stable over the 1997-2010 period, with important fluctuations being linked to the emergence of campaigns around specific issues. This paper set out to address three key aims: examine the relative level of grassroots and NGO protest, determine the issues that generated protest actions, and locate protest actions in wider campaigns. The differentiation between grassroots groups and NGOs is important given the relative prominence of the latter and the increasing professionalization of the environmental movement internationally (see van der Heijden 1999).

The findings indicate that grassroots groups undertook more protest actions over the period, likely demonstrating the ability to mobilise opposition to local issues. As Garavan (2007) notes, proximity to an issue is an important motivator. Actions undertaken by NGOs tended to be part of larger environmental campaigns that sought to generate awareness and sustain interest among the general public. Protest in such cases can be seen as part of the negotiating process with the state, used to reinforce

and possibly strengthen the position of groups in pushing for change. This was demonstrated by the anti-GM campaign, where groups such as MAdGE used both institutional channels and protest actions to exert pressure on the state (Weaver 2010).

The different approaches of grassroots groups and NGOs were also reflected in the range of issues they addressed and how these changed over time. The prominence of conservation, development, and pollution in the protest actions undertaken by grassroots groups pointed to their local origins and focus. By contrast, the issues that led to NGO protest tended to shift over time, reflecting changes in priorities and the importance of wider campaigns. This is illustrated by the decline of the anti-GE campaign from 2004 and the subsequent rise of climate change as a campaigning issue from 2005. The actions and campaigns undertaken by NGOs are more heavily influenced by the political context. Political context plays a less significant role in the actions of grassroots groups, as the focus on local issues allows for a more concentrated approach.

Through comparison of the relative success of two prominent campaigns, this article has highlighted the importance of context in shaping outcomes. A focused and narrowly targeted campaign against native forest logging on the West Coast of the South Island proved successful. The broader and much larger campaign against the use of GE technologies ultimately proved unsuccessful, as the government lifted the moratorium on field trials in the face of strong opposition. In each case, the unity of the political elite was important in determining whether the target of the claim was willing to concede. The anti-GE campaign also shows the ability of the state to shape the debate through engagement, moving away from confrontational standoff. Perhaps

most important in these two cases was the relative economic contribution of the respective environmental challenges. Ending native forest logging resulted in lost jobs in a relatively remote region (Sampson et al 2007), but can also be seen to contribute to New Zealand's 'clean, green' image (Coyle and Fairweather 2005). The debate over the use of GE technology reinforces the centrality of economic factors and political context in the success or failure of environmental campaigns. Despite widespread public opposition and a strong, sustained campaign by the environmental movement the government chose to allow the development and use of GE technology in the interests of maintaining economic opportunities (Wright and Kurian 2010).

Taken together, these findings indicate the importance of the political context in shaping both the level of protest and outcomes. Levels of reported protest actions by grassroots groups appear to be influenced to a lower extent by the political context, mainly responding to more immediate issues. However, the connection of NGO protest actions to wider campaigns means that they are very much influenced by changes in the political context, including the presence/absence of allies, the economic significance of the issue at hand, and the willingness of the government to engage with movement actors. Although environmental protest actions can play an important role in raising awareness and strengthening campaigns, their success or failure is ultimately determined by the context in which they emerge.

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[1] Incidents of 'ecotage' in the study were limited to a few actions that were part of wider campaigns (mainly destruction of GE crops) and are grouped with grassroots and NGO activities as appropriate.

[2] The Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society emerged in 1923 following protests, forming a precursor to the upsurge in interest that saw the re-emergence of the movement in its modern form. (see Star 2002)

[3] The *Dominion-Post* was formed in 2002 with the merging of *The Dominion* and *The Evening Post*. Prior to 2002 events were obtained from both newspapers. This is not expected to impact the data, as both papers were based in Wellington and covered a similar range of issues.

[4] Following a suggestion from a reviewer the terms '*ecosystem*' and '*ecology*' were also tested as search terms. This did not return any extra terms for the test period examined.

[5] This bias is recognised and manipulated by "environmental movements [that] are composed of reflexive actors who adapt their repertoire of action to the media's requirement of novelty." (Fillieule and Jiménez 2003, 264)

[6] Rootes, 2003.

[7] For a more detailed discussion of search procedures in electronic newspaper holdings see Strawn (2010).

[8] For the purposes of this paper the groups *Native Forest Action* and *Save Happy Valley* are categorised as NGOs. Although both focused on a particular issue (native forest logging and coal mining) in a relatively constrained geographical area (West Coast of the South Island), they generated support from across the country and undertook actions at a nationwide level.

[9] This finding is tempered by the fact that of the main environmental NGOs only Greenpeace and Forest and Bird engaged in protest actions over the 1997-2010 period.

[10] Much of the variation between the two types of group in 'Gather' can be attributed to the larger number of actions in protest actions involving NGOs, effectively diluting the prominence of 'Gather'.

[11] See Tilly (2008) on changes in protest repertoires.

[12] See Saunders and Price (2009) on the climate camp.

[13] NFA took its name and tactics from the earlier NFAC, but was a separate group, drawing some criticism from the founder of NFAC (see Salmon 1998).

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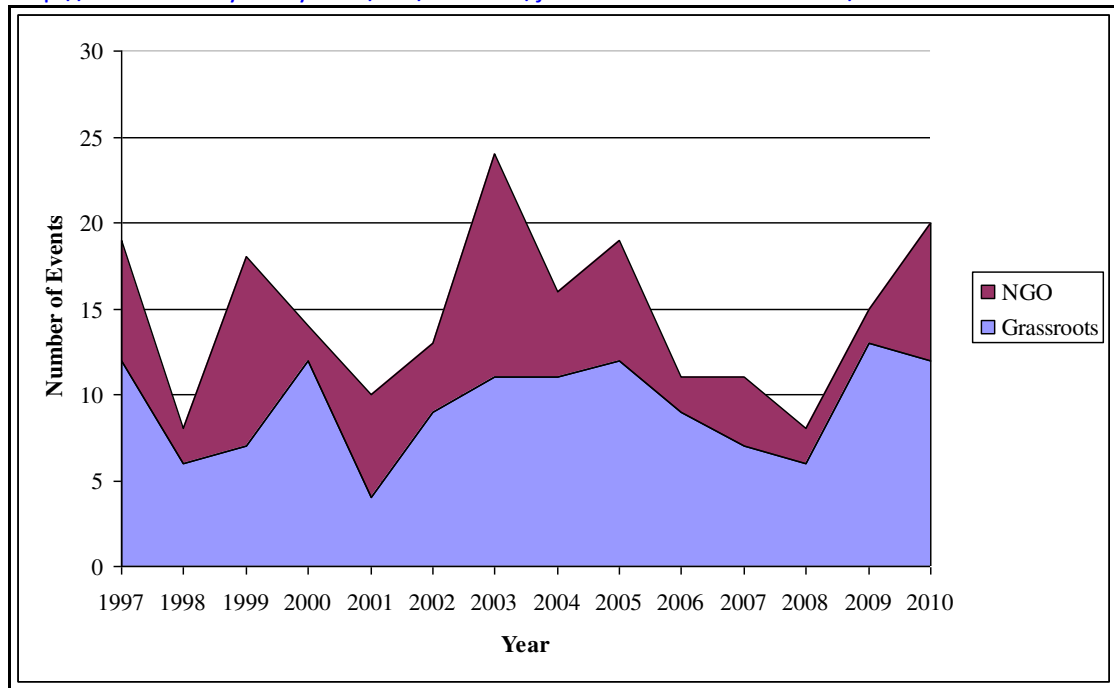
Figure I: Annual Number of Protest Events by Participant Type as Reported in

Digital Newspaper Archives Consulted (1997-2010)

Table I: Frequency of Environmental Protest Issues by Participant Type as

Reported in Digital Newspaper Archives Consulted (1997-2010)

Issue	Grassroots	NGO
Animal Rights	6.9	4.0
Climate	5.3	18.7
Conservation	25.2	17.3
Development	14.5	0.0
Forestry	7.6	1.3
GE	13.0	34.7
Mining	9.2	5.3
Pollution	12.2	13.3
Waste	3.1	2.7
Water Rights	3.1	2.7
Total	**131**	**75**

Table II: Frequency of Environmental Protest Actions by Participant Type as

Reported in Digital Newspaper Archives Consulted (1997-2010)

Action		Grassroots	NGO
Appeal	Address	3.9	3.9
	Present	2.6	3.2
Demonstrational	Gather	31.0	23.9
	Display	10.0	14.2
	March	8.3	9.0
	Perform	7.9	11.6
	Costume	3.5	1.9
	Replant	0.4	0.0
	Workshop	0.4	0.6
Confrontational	Obstruct	7.0	7.1
	Chant	6.6	8.4
	Occupy	8.3	4.5
	Enter	4.8	11.0
	Disrupt	0.9	0.0
Violent	Damage	4.4	0.6
Total		**229**	**155**