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ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS

Remapping North American Environmentalism: Contending Visions and Divergent Practices in the Fight over NAFTA*

By Michael Dreiling

1. Introduction

The implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on January 1, 1994 firmly established a major policy victory for the architects of neoliberal markets.¹ For over two years (1991-1993), the U.S. Trade Representative’s office and prominent corporate supporters faced a barrage of legal and political assaults on their efforts to pass NAFTA. Recognizing these challenges as a threat to their planned trade zone, a powerful corporate mobilization swiftly disabled their opponents and established support in Congress. Following Congressional approval of the agreement in November, 1993, the

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¹Markets characterized as “neoliberal” are best contrasted with markets where state or community sanctions may be deployed to protect society and nature from the logic of commodification. Neoliberal markets thus epitomize the classic-liberal utopia of an unregulated market society (See Karl Polanyi, The Great Transformation: the Political and Economic Origins of Our Time [Boston: Beacon Press, 1944]). Neoliberalism is thus defined as an encompassing perspective that claims that the “market allocates resources to all uses more efficiently than political institutions” (Adam Przeworski, The State and Economy Under Capitalism [New York: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1990], p. 15).
Heritage Foundation declared "Ronald Reagan's vision realized." With similar enthusiasm, the U.S. Council for International Business served international leadership awards to corporate executives for their role in "the business community's successful effort to pass NAFTA." Indeed, while leading segments of capital celebrated, an elaborate public relations campaign disassociated corporate intent from the agreement and concealed the disastrous socio-ecological consequences of NAFTA and the larger economic strategy on which it rests.

Beneath these shrouds of neoliberal celebré, the march of unhindered, capitalist markets, and in particular the NAFTA, continues to generate unjust and ecologically destructive economic practices. Contrary to claims that environmentally destructive growth will be contained by market-incentives in NAFTA and its side accords (supposedly the "greenest" trade agreement ever), a concentration of toxic industries along the border, rural and industrial dislocation, and a conversion of indigenous lands to the cultivation of export crops has accelerated under NAFTA. The reduction of nature and community to commodities and cost-factors — exacerbated by the promotion of unfettered trade and greater capital mobility — override any "green" incentives intended to deter capitalist zeal from boosting profits by displacing costs onto society and nature. The ease and flexibility with which capital may invest, relocate, and subsume non-market goals through the NAFTA merely facilitates and encourages such cost-externalization.

The sustained struggle against this neoliberal project, however, ignited internal transformations in key social movements in North America and pushed important movement organizations toward more democratic, tactically offensive, and internationalist practices. As early as October, 1990, a broad range of social movements coalesced to assert

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3U.S. Council for International Business monthly newsletter, October, 1994, p. 7. The USCIB is the formal representative of U.S. capital to the OECD. The OECD, or Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, is a forum for constructing common economic agendas among leaders of the largest capitalist countries of the world.

a claim for “fair trade” and submit the imperatives of profit and accumulation to a “Continental Social Pact.” The ability to construct and deploy “fair trade” within the social movement sectors of Mexico and the U.S. was conditioned during the early 1990s as two national historic conjunctures unfolded. The left populism of neocardenismo in Mexico met a U.S. global environmentalism — recently challenged by a movement for environmental justice — and integrated popular opposition across political boundaries. They “met” at the border — the free trade zone — where political and economic crises in both countries collided with nation and ecology.

Indeed, by 1992 hundreds of cross-border links among grassroots groups constituted one important base for the national-level coalitions in opposition to the NAFTA. Across North America, mounting opposition in the polls, on the streets, and in the workplace made legislative passage of the NAFTA an uncertain affair, particularly in the U.S. and Canada. In the U.S., the AFL-CIO placed the trade agreement on their legislative agenda immediately upon news of the agreement, but environmentalists were at the forefront of mobilizing a critique of free trade, particularly in response to the extensive environmental degradation along the U.S.-Mexico border.

While this paper focuses on the importance of environmentalism in politicizing global development and trade policy in the U.S., the role of organized labor in harnessing resources and mobilizing opposition to the NAFTA cannot be underestimated. Moreover, during the period between 1989 and 1992, while many environmental organizations were forging grassroots ties across borders, the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organization (AFL-CIO) made an important shift in policy towards the labor movement in Mexico. The AFL-CIO broke a strong relation with the ruling party’s (Partido Revolucionario Institucional — PRI) official union federation in Mexico, the Confederacion de Trabajadores Mexicanos (CTM). At the same time, activists proposed that the AFL-CIO get involved in coalition efforts to expose the exploitation and abuse of Mexican

5 The symbolic and political legacy of Cardenas, whose father was perhaps the most popular president in postrevolutionary Mexico, cannot be undercounted. Indeed, “Cuauhtemoc Cardenas became the symbol, the redemptive myth, capable of reversing social decay, of resuming the abandoned [revolutionary] path and promoting democratization, the defense of national sovereignty, and social equality” (Tamayo, Jaime “Neoliberalism Encounters Neocardenismo,” in Joe Foweraker and Ann Craig, eds., Popular Movements and Political Change in Mexico [Boulder, CO: Rienner Publishers, 1990], pp. 130-31).
communities and workers by transnational corporations along the border. This coalition effort led to one of the most important bi-national groups along the U.S.-Mexico border, the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras (CJM). Consequently, the AFL-CIO’s financial support and participation in the CJM forged a series of “weak ties” with other social movement sectors and activists, ties that would become highly salient in the development of national anti-NAFTA coalitions and continental networks. Thus the labor movement was crucial to the strength of the anti-NAFTA challenge, but remained slow to cultivate a public discourse in opposition to the NAFTA. In some ways this was a strategic error, which became apparent by early 1992 when Ross Perot began his drive for presidency and monopolized the rhetoric on jobs and the NAFTA, thus effectively excluding the potency of an autonomous challenge by labor.6

To summarize our main questions, what were the conditions that prompted the broad, cross-border environmental challenge to the NAFTA? In what ways did environmentalist participation in the anti-NAFTA coalitions, both nationally and internationally, inform the political strategies of the fair trade movement? How was environmental mobilization subsequently disabled as a formidable opponent?

In answering these questions, this paper focuses on environmental mobilization and countermobilization within the U.S. In addition, systematic contrasts with the NAFTA opposition in Mexico demonstrate the underlying tensions between movements that focus on the practice of social justice versus those defined by conventional tactics.7 For example, recent grassroots movements for environmental justice have altered the terrain of environmentalism by offering an

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7By conventional, I refer to political practice that follows institutionalized channels of influence characteristic of clientelism, formal litigation, legislative lobbying, and electoral aims. See Ulf Hjelmar, The Political Practice of Environmental Organizations (Aldershot, England: Avebury, 1996).
alternative to the conciliatory, market-oriented environmentalism being
defined by several dominant, mainstream groups. Furthermore, the
challenge of environmental justice has introduced not only a political
ideology that is critical of the environmental mainstream, but has urged
that movement practices be aimed away from conventional channels of
power toward the grassroots. Emulating some of these environmental
justice tendencies during the NAFTA-fight, groups such as Greenpeace
and Friends of the Earth (FOE) pursued a strategy of international
solidarity and cross-movement alliance building. Together, a movement
intersection between environmental justice and the global focus of
groups such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, shaped a strategy
emphasizing grassroots mobilization and a global containment of
neoliberalism. The struggle over NAFTA facilitated this position.

Yet these practices and orientations were not the only forces
defining opposition to NAFTA. The uneven response by mainstream
environmental organizations to the challenge of fair trade, and by
implication, environmental justice, shaped their stance in the NAFTA
fight. Those groups disposed to compromise with policy elites and the
advocacy of market incentives found little difficulty in rejecting the
multi-issue concerns being expressed from the broad coalitions against
NAFTA. On the other hand, those groups facing internal ideological
and grassroots-leadership schisms, such as the Sierra Club, were pulled
further away from the cooptive strategies of capital and state policy
elite. Similarly, in Mexico, social movement efforts to dissociate from
clientelistic forms of state control found increased autonomy and
leverage following the neocardenista mobilization since 1988. This
increased autonomy and demand for democratization signified a break
from the solid post-revolutionary power of Mexico’s ruling party.
Amidst heightened state repression in Mexico, the struggle against the
NAFTA reinforced earlier efforts to split from entrenched forms of
political cooptation. Coupled with a search for autonomous politics and
recent grassroots mobilizations, political and cultural concerns for
environmental justice in the U.S. and a broad, left-populism in Mexico
were harnessed as “fair trade” strategies aimed at forging cross-border
alliances and circumscribing neoliberal markets.

Three interrelated points define the aims of this paper. First, social
and ecological dislocations associated with widespread implementation
of neoliberal markets, particularly along the U.S.-Mexico border, have
generated local political responses with repercussions affecting both the
language and political practice of leading North American
environmental groups. Secondly, this confluence of movements,
neoliberal markets and environmental degradation entered the NAFTA-
debate and stimulated the construction of an internationalist vision of "fair trade," emphasizing the subordination of unregulated trade and capital accumulation to principles of social and ecological democracy. Finally, by making apparent the distinction between free trade and fair trade, the cultural rift between neoliberal environmentalism and environmental justice was further exposed, revealing important political splits and contradictions within North American environmentalism.

Indeed, underlining the political threat that "free market environmentalism" represents to struggles for environmental justice, the passage of NAFTA was facilitated by the capacity of neoliberal capital to deflect environmental opposition by harnessing the political resources of several large environmental groups in both the U.S. and Mexico. By exposing the loyalty of these leading, pro-NAFTA environmental groups to "market incentives" and political "compromise," however, the struggle ignited effects that rippled throughout key sectors of North American environmentalism. During the NAFTA-fight, the progressive organizations — Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, and most surprisingly the Sierra Club — expressed the ability and desire to adopt principles of environmental justice and forge meaningful cross-border and cross-movement alliances. While many important changes resulting from the sustained mobilization remain evident in movements throughout North America, there is strong evidence that those seemingly secure changes are insufficient. In order to combat cooptation by neoliberal strategists and avert an ever more encompassing enclosure of society and ecology from the snares of neoliberal capitalism, the more progressive environmental organizations must return to the grassroots and adopt both the culture and tactics of ecological democracy.

2. Environmentalism, Neocardenismo, and Neoliberalism

The fractures and realignments among major environmental groups that occurred during the fight against NAFTA emerged from developments in the environmental movement that began to take form during the 1980s. Despite a relatively stable growth in membership throughout the 1980s, the environmental movement, according to many authors, was "losing ground." A growing rift between the grassroots

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and the nation's largest groups exposed very different momentums, strategies, and resources dispersed throughout the movement. Mark Dowie refers to this rupture in terms of two contending approaches — "third" and "fourth wave" environmentalism — aimed at capturing the nation's environmental imagination. Third wave environmentalism, according to Dowie, "represents nothing so much as the institutionalization of compromise" during the 1980s and may well be remembered as "a brief attempt by corporate America to capture the nation's environmental imagination." Third wave groups, such as the Environmental Defense Fund, National Wildlife Federation, and the Natural Resources Defense Council, have proved quite effective in designing "pollution prevention" strategies that rely on "market-based incentives," such as pollution permits and allowances; in short, the right to pollute then sell the pollution. A fourth wave, Dowie argues, is emerging and has shuffled beneath the "Big Green" groups with an increasing sense of urgency and breadth of social constituents. This fourth wave is emerging with an uncompromisingly anti-corporate ideology, "democratic in origin, populist in style, untrammeled by bureaucracy, and inspired by a host of new ideologies...." For Dowie and others, recent mobilizations for environmental justice characterize this emerging "wave" of the movement. In order to understand the ways in which third wave groups were challenged and destabilized in the NAFTA-fight, it is worth examining these broad divisions and related developments in the movement, particularly in relation to neoliberalism.

First, during the 1980s several mainstream environmental organizations targeted large banks, and more generally, international finance capital, in an effort to negotiate the consequences of "ecological imperialism," manifested in the politics of biodiversity and tropical deforestation, trade in toxics, global warming, and a whole host of debt-related assaults on the biosphere. The tactics employed in these global


9Dowie, op cit.
10Ibid., pp. 107, 206.
11Ibid., p. 109.
12Ibid., p. 206.

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causes varied, reflecting opposed commitments by these large organizations to the grassroots. Groups such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth (and its global affiliates, e.g. Rainforest Action Network) typify a practice of global environmentalism that is not confined to "polite" politics, and in fact encourages grassroots mobilization. On the other hand, the National Wildlife Federation, World Wildlife Fund, and several others pursued a politics of compromise and negotiation with representatives of Northern finance capital. Alongside both tendencies was an expansion of relations with a rapidly expanding environmental sector among social movements in the global South. Moreover, a menu of global environmental concerns in the monthly newsletters of these large U.S. organizations formed an effective marketing strategy, helping stimulate high membership growth rates among those organizations focused on international issues.14

Secondly, this two-pronged globalization of environmentalism was coupled with a "fourth wave" grassroots current — most recently articulated as the environmental justice movement — linking local sites of conflict through regional coalitions "typically led by women, working-class people, and people of color."15 Unlike conservationist efforts to maintain distance between social issues and species (or habitat) protection, the environmental justice movement "does not treat the problem of oppression and social exploitation as separable from the rape and exploitation of the natural world."16 By 1989, the anti-toxics and environmental justice leadership initiated a challenge to "third wave" leaders, demanding recognition of the social injustices associated with unequal toxic exposures induced by poverty and environmental racism.17 The mainstream response was uneven at best.

17The landmark First People of Color Environmental Summit in 1991 formalized the challenge by the emerging movement for environmental justice to the environmental mainstream. Robert Bullard, ed., Confronting
Lastly, neoliberal intellectuals and corporate foundations began cultivating and refining the ideological tools of the third wave and forged a "free market environmentalism;" an environmentalist discourse subsumed under neoliberal ideology. Standing on the defensive in 1981, the CEOs of the largest conservationist organizations formed the "Group of Ten" (G-10) with the explicit aim of creating a niche in the neoliberal policy agenda under Reagan. Succumbing to the political dominance of neoliberal capital, the "Group of Ten" increasingly leaned to market solutions for environmental regulation, turning nature into "a commodity to be bought and sold" and defining objectives "in terms of their economic value." Under this logic, the "property rights paradigm" provides the foundation for exalting market authority through "market incentives," which form the "key" to both protection and cleanup. Jay D. Hair — then-President of the National Wildlife Federation — urged that "our arguments must translate into profits, earnings, productivity, and economic incentives for industry."

Similarly, numerous right-wing intellectuals, sponsored by the Heritage Foundation (and affiliates), the Center for Strategic and International Studies as well as newly directed Federal funds, began a politico-ideological offensive on the politically threatening sectors of the environmental movement. As the Group of Tens' defensiveness subsided, overtures to industry became routinized through the boards and funding sources of these organizations.

Neoliberalism was deployed quite effectively in international institutions as well. This was particularly apparent with the construction of a new orthodoxy at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) — an orthodoxy that gave full authority to the "free market" to

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19 Gottlieb, op cit., p. 317.
20 Quoted in Daniel Faber and James O'Connor, op. cit., p 34, from Barry Commoner, "A Reporter at Large: The Environment," The New Yorker, June 15, 1987. Numerous "third-wave" environmental organizations, such as the Environmental Defense Fund, helped engineer such market-based approaches to capitalizing on nature.
22 Dowie, op cit.; Gottlieb, op cit.
relieve the "distortions" of state-directed national development. Following the debt crises of the early 1980s, debtor governments had to "present a plan for economic stabilization conforming to conditionality and structural adjustment criteria demanded by the IMF and World Bank as the basis for certification of creditworthiness." These criteria were consistent with the restructuring of Mexico's debt in 1983 and 1989, which the U.S. Government and the IMF administered.

In 1983, the Mexican government formally adopted a structural adjustment package labeled the Plan Integral de Recuperacion Economica, with policy-implementing instruments corresponding to the orthodoxy of the IMF. The program entailed a dramatic reduction in public expenditures, privatization, a reduction of the fiscal deficit, increases in real interest rates, cuts in real wages, and a shift of macroeconomic policy in favor of the export sector. Under increasing pressure from growing debt and economic crisis, the PRI had effectively come under the heavy influence of global capital, a condition widely perceived as an intrusion on national sovereignty.

The passivity of the PRI to the requisites of international powers is not enough to understand the weakening of state-corporatism and the crisis in the PRIs legitimacy. The ongoing struggles of popular movements to shape their linkage with the political system, and the corporatist strategies to manage these struggles, have contributed to changes in the institutional configuration of both civil society and the state. Foweracker suggests that the popular struggles in the last decade strengthened civil society as groups shifted strategies from petitioning the cacicazgos, or the clientelistic systems of power, to demands for democracy and the normative application of law, or an "estado de derecho." This shift in institutional terrain towards increasing the "civilizing capacity" of revolutionary constitutional law has indeed

created new spaces for civil society. At the same time, as Laborde argues, this new space in society has allowed for an extensive political project on the part of new business groups demanding a more restricted neoliberal state. On the other hand, unlike some countries where

...a similar neoliberal...project to restrict the political arena has coincided with the "new social movements" aspirations to autonomy and noninstitutional politics, in Mexico the popular movements have taken the field to combat this project and defend the...social pact inscribed

28Ibid., p. 16.

within [the corporatist state]. And in this regard, it appears possible that in Mexico the project is leading not only to less economic protection but also to less political "protection" and, in particular, to a far less effective corporative control of the electoral arena. Thus, the contingent outcome of this project of political exclusion is to open up new political spaces for the strategic initiatives of popular organizations.\(^\text{31}\)

Thus, the emergence of a "neoliberal authoritarian state"\(^\text{32}\) in Mexico — in the context of a complex of national and international forces — established an arena whereby a national coalition of social movements would press the political system into electoral crisis in 1988.

The election year of 1988 witnessed large popular-sector mobilizations, such as the first appearance of the National Front for Mass Organizations in Mexico City.\(^\text{33}\) These mass movements coalesced under a left-populist leadership that emerged from an intra-elite dispute within the ruling party and formed the National Democratic Front (FDN) — the movement precursor to the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). The mass organizations that joined the FDN campaign formed a national level network between the administrative center of Mexico City and the Northern regions. The PRD's presidential campaign movement for Cardenas, to become neocardenismo, thus "reversed the tendency of social movements to sectoralize their demands by permitting their insertion into a national project that aggregated all criticisms of the economic and social policy of the regime and arguments for the defense of national sovereignty and the rejection of the state party and corporatism."\(^\text{34}\)

Following the defeat of popular forces and Cardenas' presidential campaign through widespread electoral fraud and repression, it was clear that the PRI's successor, President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, would push the neoliberal project to new limits. His administration oversaw the privatization of hundreds of state enterprises and the liberalization of national economic frontiers (ultimately by urging a NAFTA) which

\(^{31}\)Foweracker, op. cit., p. 15.  
\(^{32}\)Tamayo, op. cit., p. 131.  
\(^{34}\)Tamayo, op. cit., p. 130-131.
further intensified capital investment in the northern states and border regions.\textsuperscript{35} This created a disparate, but important socio-spatial link to the North from the political center, and ultimately the socio-economic space for a deeper construction of “bridges” across the border. Salinas’ “reform” of Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution pushed the neoliberal program into the most precarious of contexts — the legal foundation for the ejido, the communally regulated landholdings of indigenous campesinos.\textsuperscript{36} This “reform,” considered a necessity by neoliberal technocrats and the IMF, is aiming at the “enclosure” of all communal holdings by assigning property rights to ejido plots. Together with the lowering of tariffs on U.S. produced corn and grains, which will accelerate dramatically with the NAFTA, it is no wonder the Zapatista National Liberation Army (Ejercito de Zapatista Liberacion Nacional — EZLN) considers the NAFTA “a death sentence for indigenous peoples.”\textsuperscript{37} With the absence of state-credit subsidies and Constitutional protection of the ejido, millions of indebted peasants could be forced to sell off their “shares” of land and enter into the wage labor market by the year 2000.\textsuperscript{38}

This dramatic escalation of neoliberal reforms has no doubt continued to alter the political landscape of Mexico, most evident in the persistent defiance of the EZLN to neoliberal capitalism and the ruling party. Rejecting the corporatist strategies of the state, the EZLN has anchored (and benefited from) a popular strategy that de-emphasizes conciliatory pacts with the government, while asserting the primacy of social protection from the unregulated market through democratic institutions. The left populism of neocardenismo gave initiative and substance to this popular break from the corporatist state, though at the same time, the popular upsurge in 1988 activated an intensified effort by the ruling party to either coopt, or repress, new movements and

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\textsuperscript{36}Adolfo Aguilar Zinsen, “Authoritarianism and North American Free Trade: the Debate in Mexico,” in \textit{ibid}.

\textsuperscript{37}See George A. Collier, \textit{Basta! Land and the Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas} (Oakland: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1994).

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organizations. Following the elections of 1988, social movements in Mexico faced two related political conditions: a heightened opportunity to link regional and sectoral concerns through a national movement, and, through a semi-autonomous relation with the PRD, to develop a politics of disengagement from the PRI. Thus, when the NAFTA entered as a site of public conflict in 1991, many conditions for a democratic-left and environmentalist assault were in place, particularly with the struggles already engaged along the border.

3. Cross-border Coalitions and Socio-ecological Claims on the Market

Debates over the NAFTA were preceded by, and developed around, the struggle over the meaning and character of economic development. The discursive terrain on which this struggle began was at the “border,” or more precisely, the conditions of life in the “free trade zones” and the deregulated production in the maquiladoras. Rapid environmental degradation, persistent declines in real wages, and highly uneven patterns of urbanization made the U.S.-Mexico border the site for constructing a critique of neoliberal development and trade. It was here that the moment of neocardenismo and the regional base of its support met the confluence of third and fourth wave environmentalism. In other words, the assault on national sovereignty coincided with a global environmentalism, having a common meeting place at the border. The geo-historical concurrence of political-economic crises fragmented the character of the border, making it the exemplar of free trade, environmental degradation, and the assault on national sovereignty. Thus, newly formed binational coalitions entered national and international political arenas with a rhetorical instrument grounded in an environmental science of border life. The border became the region — at least temporarily — for testing the opposed frameworks of neoliberalism and environmental justice.


40In November, 1991, the Tucson Citizen reported “Grassroots Border Alliances Form: free trade talks are said to be catalyst,” and the L.A. Times (August 12, 1992) reported on “A Deal That’s Hazardous to your Health.” The San Diego Tribune, June 27, 1992, reported “Environment is Key to Trade Pact Issue.” In addition to concern for national sovereignty in Mexico, the heightened salience of the U.S.-Mexico border further fueled a right-wing national populism in the U.S. The right-wing opposition to the NAFTA, assaults on immigrants and immigrant rights, and the progressive
What is important for the purposes here is the salience of the formation of “a social system [that] creates a community of interests around the boundary [between the nations].”41 This boundary “is characterized as a setting where the North-South dialogue takes on a distinctly environmental and spatial character, because it is here that the two nations and cultures meet physically” on a natural geophysical surface, but interrupted by the political organization of this space.42 Not unlike the cases of Chernobyl and the Rhine river contamination in Europe during the 1980s, the extensive environmental degradation along the U.S.-Mexico border exemplifies the contested and shared nature of this space.

The “border” as place entered public discourse in Mexico and the U.S. with rapidity during the 1980s. Growing attention by the media about U.S.-Mexican relations and concerns “signaled the growing significance of the international boundary between...” the two nations.43 The meetings held each year by the two nations increasingly focus on topics related to “border economic and policy issues, including immigration policy, maquiladoras, drug trafficking, tourism, border ecology, and pollution.”44 In addition, the inter-relationships of the national civil societies have increased in density in the forms of grassroots movements, labor union networks, associations and coalitional organizations, migration patterns, and business associations.

Between 1987 and 1991 cross border links between labor, environmental, women’s, human rights, Latina/o and consumer organizations proliferated and began fusing civil, worker, and environmental justice concerns. In Mexico, one of the most important independent labor organizations in the country, the Frente Autentico del Trabajo (FAT) — and a key founder of the Mexican Action Network on Free Trade (RMALC) — developed numerous links with U.S. and mobilizations to protect those rights are additional variants on the theme of “protecting” national sovereignty.

42Ibid, p. 6.
43Ibid, p. 10.
Another border group, Mujer a Mujer (MAM — Woman to Woman) collaborated with Mujeres en Accion Sindical (MAS — Women in Union Action) to form the first trinational working-women’s conference. A broad based community coalition, the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras (CJM), formed with the intent on pressuring U.S. multinational corporations to adopt socially responsible practices. The formation of the CJM subsequently helped forge important ties across a broad cross-section of national organizations and local grassroots organizations. The Border Ecology Project (BEP) — linked strongly to the Enlace Ecologico (Ecological Link) and the Proyecto Fronterizo de Educacion Ambiental (Border Project for Environmental Education) — has produced environmental science for border struggles with corporations and government agencies. The now-defunct National Toxics Campaign (a founding member of CJM) also produced a seminal analysis of border river pollutants. Their studies were widely used and cited in Congressional Hearings over “fast track” and the NAFTA, and were subsequently influential in garnering wider environmental support.

More generally, border-area groups

45 Clearly influenced by the old Communist Party culture, the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers’ (UE) consciously militant style and strategy makes it a unique case within the U.S. labor movement. The UE-FAT “Proposal for Action” defined cross-border organizing as part of an effort to establish “a beachhead of democratic unionism in strategic sectors of the Mexican economy...” (August 1, 1992).

46 See Mujer a Mujer, “Women Fight Against ‘Free Trade’ Restructuring,” in Correspondencia, monthly newsletter, February, 1992. These cases are but a few, albeit important examples of cross-border organizing.

47 Fast-track legislation is designed to expedite congressional approval of international agreements. Moreover, treating the NAFTA (and GATT) in this way prevents these agreements from being ratified as treaties, which would require a two-thirds majority in the Senate. With fast-track, trade agreements can only be ratified without amendments through a simple-majority.

48 It should be noted that the organizing tactics of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP), and later the Fair Trade Campaign, included a specific strategy to cultivate and deploy an environmentalist critique of free trade with the intent of gaining broader environmentalist support (personal interview, Craig Merrilees, October 21, 1994). For examples of the use of an environmental science of border life to critique free trade, see testimonies for the Committee on Finance: U.S. Senate, United States-Mexico Free Trade Agreement: Hearings before the Committee on Finance, February 6 and 20, 1991 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1991); Committee on Environment and Public Works and the Subcommittee on Labor of the Committee on Labor and Human Resources, Economic and Environmental Implications of the Proposed U.S.
began to form regular and cooperative relations with the larger anti-toxics and environmental justice movement. Groups such as *Sin Frontera*, the Southwest Organizing Project, and Citizen's Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste found the border as a site where multiple forms of social and environmental exploitation could be viewed as a systematic problem that the environmental mainstream was unlikely to address. Importantly, these and other grassroots groups and coalitions, despite their limited resources as local organizations, set an institutional tone for the formation of broader national networks involving very large movement organizations.49

Unlike in Canada, labor and progressive movements in the U.S. were relatively idle throughout the Canada-U.S. Trade negotiations. Though popular organizing efforts in the U.S. began to focus on the Uruguay Rounds of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1985, none had achieved a significant national level coalition until January, 1991, when concerns over the implementation of “fast track” legislation for the NAFTA escalated.50 In 1989, representatives from several unions, environmental groups, farmer organizations, and progressive think tanks began to develop a Fair Trade campaign, where worker, environmental, consumer, farmer, and human rights could be enforceably linked to trade policy. In early 1990, news


50The role of the IATP, particularly their Executive Director Mark Ritchie, cannot be undercounted. Tied into many development, small farming, and economic justice groups, the IATP was at the front of developing alternative conceptions of international trade within the progressive policy arena since the mid-eighties. The IATP remained one of the most important networking organizations throughout the NAFTA and GATT struggles.
of the proposed U.S.-Mexico Free Trade Agreement "leaked" from the Bush Administration. Differences in strategy among these "Beltway" actors towards the proposed free trade agreement became explicit. One block, to become the Alliance for Responsible Trade (ART), emphasized the importance of involving groups in Mexico to build an international campaign. The lobbying teams formed the Citizen’s Trade Campaign (CTC), and pushed the immediate goal of defeating the pending trade agreement. Within the year, negotiations intensified for global trade liberalization under both the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the U.S.-Mexico Free Trade Agreement (the precursor to NAFTA). The fair trade advocates now set forth to mobilize two uneven, and sometimes competing strategies through the groups that began to consolidate around the two coalitions.

Stemming from U.S. movements with sharp divisions in forms of political practice — from the isolated left-wing of the labor movement to the moderate interest-group politics of the Sierra Club — the fair trade mobilization was similarly structured. The dominance of "interest group" tactics by the most resourceful sectors of U.S. movements strengthened, indeed, formed the Citizen’s Trade Campaign. On the other hand, ART’s capacity to deploy more disruptive tactics was severely constrained by the absence of resource-rich movement organizations. ART’s efforts were nonetheless supported and remarkably influential at establishing (and still maintaining) international relations with unions and human rights groups in Mexico. A differentiation of political strategy among U.S. groups, unlike in Canada and Mexico, thus resulted in two coalitions with unequal access to movement resources.

In Mexico, out of the context of a regionally fragmented popular sector emerged the local foundations for the formation of national coalitions and international links. In 1991, the binational networks that emerged from the problems along the border (CJM, Mujer a Mujer, etc.), provided the organizational base for broader alliances. Mexico City-based efforts were linked to the border regions through the Mexican Action Network on Free Trade (RMALC) which "originated within labor unions and other NGOs with prior ties to groups in the

51 The ART sustained itself through a close network of internationally oriented activists from several Washington, D.C. groups, including the International Labor Rights Education and Research Fund, Economic Policy Institute, Greenpeace, the Development Group for Alternative Policy, and Institute for Policy Studies.
United States and Canada such as the Authentic Labor Front, Common
Frontiers, People’s Team, and Mujer a Mujer.”

The sharply repressive and co-optive nature of the Mexican state via
the military and the PRI’s quasi-governmental clientelistic networks,
created conditions for a single, though radical alliance of activists and
movement organizations. Without the equivalent of “Capitol Hill” and
the short-term effectiveness offered by lobbying and litigation, the
PRI’s dominance of all popular platforms, including the media and
central organs of the labor movement, prevented an anti-NAFTA tactic
from materializing in ways analogous to the CTC in the U.S. Rather,
the RMALC focused tactically on grassroots mobilization and education
from the outset. Working consistently with a broad range of center-left
organizations, the RMALC mobilized through its numerous constituent
organizations. Despite the PRI-sponsored media blackout, the political
reins on organized labor through the PRI-client CTM, and state
repression in the countryside, the RMALC deployed an effective
transnational campaign that further informed the continental challenge
to neoliberalism.

Strong links between RMALC activists and several U.S. and
Canadian groups reinforced ties already formed between sector specific
groups, such as Enlace Ecologico-Border Ecology Project, and United
Electrical Workers and the Frente Autentico del Trabajo (FAT). The
Alliance for Responsible Trade (ART) in the U.S. — especially
through affiliations with the UE and Development Group for
Alternative Policy, and later through Friends of the Earth (FOE) —
formed a crucial node from which transnational anti-NAFTA strategy

52Ricardo Hernandez and Edith Sanchez, Cross-Border Links: A Directory of
Organizations in Canada, Mexico and the U.S. (Albuquerque: Inter-
53The joint submissions by the Teamsters and UE to the National
Administrative Office were not only a test for expanding international labor
solidarity, but also a test of the side accord established under the NAFTA,
the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation. Both submissions
declared that Mexican officials failed to enforce relevant labor laws around
incidents at two U.S.-based multinational operations where Mexican
workers were fired for attempting to organize a local affiliate of the Frente
Autentico del Trabajo (FAT), independent of the dominant Confederation of
Mexican Workers (CTM). The NAO filed a report that “found disagreement
about the events...” and that it “is not in a position to make a finding that
the Government of Mexico failed to enforce the relevant labor laws” (U.S.
#940001 and NAO Submission #940002 [Washington, D.C.: Bureau of
would form. Teach-ins, lobbying sessions, cross-border marches and rallies, and continental fair trade proposals were the products of the transnational networks. On the other hand, groups affiliated primarily with the Citizen's Trade Campaign, such as the Sierra Club, most large unions, and animal rights groups, remained disconnected from RMALC through most of the NAFTA fight. Some two years following the NAFTA fight, fair trade internationalism has begun to inform those groups that remained on the conventional political path of the Citizen's Trade Campaign.

Despite the disunity in political strategy and resources, the national and transnational structure of the fair trade mobilization operated relatively well and the overall effects of these broad alliances were profound. The conventional legislative tactic characteristic of the environmental mainstream (and the AFL-CIO) was able to operate alongside a more radical, though resource-constrained effort to expand transnational solidarity, problematize conventional tactics, and construct an alternative vision. The duality of this mobilization was facilitated by heightened opportunities to build broader alliances through unions and environmental groups acting as linchpins within the alliance, linking various wings of the respective movements. Groups such as FOE, the Teamsters, and Clean Water Action straddled both U.S. coalitions in addition to active efforts at building international links alongside their more radical counterparts, like Greenpeace and the UE. These structural “bridges” thus enabled the formation of a prototype for the broad, progressive alliance that is probably necessary to move us beyond the neoliberal project, and contributed a vision toward that end.

The basic normative claims of these networks called for democratizing international trade relationships and submitting the market and capital accumulation to social needs. For instance, the declaration of Zacatecas opened with the following: “We insist that trade be part of a strategy of continental development that guarantees the distribution of wealth, the elevation of living standards, and the self-determination of our peoples.”

Cardenas' own “Continental Development Initiative” coincides with the demands of the Mexican network: “Economic liberalization is not our objective, it is but one of

54Two years after the agreement, large movement organizations such as the Friends of the Earth, Sierra Club, United Mine Workers of America, Teamsters, and Public Citizen remain actively committed to extending fair trade campaigns across the hemisphere while neoliberal capital prepares for the “Free Trade Area of the Americas” (FTAA).
our tools. Development, social justice and a clean environment are our objectives." The Alliance for Responsible Trade, ART's, alternative agenda makes the same appeal: "Trade and investment — the main areas addressed in the proposed agreement [NAFTA] — should not be seen as ends in themselves, but as tools toward development, social justice and a healthy environment." 

All the major networks, and many of the bi/tri-national coalitions and grassroots organizations, thus recognize the unregulated market as a common threat to society and nature. Their public literature, formal declarations, press statements, etc., are imbued with this common understanding, though manifest within the political culture of the movements. In the U.S., many oppositional networks and organizations immediately before the first signing of the agreement in December, 1992. Here, the unregulated market manifested itself as a "Sneak Attack on Democracy," of whom the "beneficiaries are multi-national corporations for whom democracy itself is an impediment to their free trade." In Mexico, on the other hand, the concern for national sovereignty had a more radically democratic twist, making appeals to the threats to democracy as well as those to national sovereignty more effective. For instance, RMALC's statement on free trade states the "indispensable conditions for economic integration," which should include: "a) an ample and democratic consultation with all potentially affected sectors, through a national referendum...; b) clear guarantees of our political independence and national sovereignty; c) true respect for the Political Constitution of Mexico and the national laws..."

Highlighting the contradiction between free trade and democracy, the anti-NAFTA coalitions improved their ability to forge a multi-issue language consonant with the interests of a broad range of movement

59This was in marked contrast to the concerns for "national sovereignty" expressed within an economic nationalist ideology and often explicitly racist subtext by the right-wing Perot and Buchanan fronts in the U.S.
60Hernandez and Sanchez, op. cit., p. 15.
constituencies. As a framework for citizen mobilization, threats to democracy carry a broad appeal. Furthermore, by linking trade and democracy in this way, activists challenged prevalent notions that capitalism is equivalent to democracy. Indeed, the NAFTA-opposition pressed an ideological platform (sometimes more radically than intended) that (temporarily) severed the link between liberal markets and liberal politics. For environmentalism, this helped set the tone for arguments between leading environmental groups over the role that market incentives and democratic institutions should play in the reconciliation of human economic activity with ecology. For those groups that remained opposed to NAFTA, it was much easier to learn that global ecological distress could not be resolved through free markets, only exacerbated.

In the 1990s, before the signing of the agreement, the national and international environmental community became increasingly active on the contested terrain of "sustainable development." The NAFTA's exhortation of "sustainable development" in the preamble was thus a perfect place for continuing the contests concerning 'sustainability' and who will (or can) manage it. Indeed, most criticisms in the U.S., especially those endorsed by a cross section of the environmental majors, centered on the ways in which the NAFTA actually precludes "sustainable development." The focus was on issues of funding for cleanup, means of enforcement, and the mechanisms of dispute resolution.

Environmentalist opposition in Mexico added and extended dimensions of environmentalism in the North (or the U.S. and Canada) and vice versa. This was particularly apparent in debates concerning the purpose and means of development. Not only was the problem of vast U.S. natural resource consumption sharpened in debates, but the main Mexican opposition group, the RMALC, countered the Perot-centered argument of "don't send U.S. jobs to Mexico" with "don't send Mexico's natural resources to the U.S." By framing environmental

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63 Steering Committee statement from an RMALC meeting, October 4, 1993. This statement was widely used in press statements at later dates.
concerns in this way, the dichotomy between the North and South was sharpened and globalized.

Thus by 1992 many citizen groups — including environmental organizations — were actively constructing their understanding of the NAFTA. This implied an internal engagement with one’s own mission as an organization, as well as a critique of their opponents’ neoliberal project, and hence unregulated market activity such as free trade. Documents such as “Look Before You Leap: What You Should Know About a NAFTA,” “The Citizens Analysis of the NAFTA,” and “A Just and Sustainable Development Initiative for North America” (produced in consultation with networks in all three countries) suggest a discourse that is reappropriating a critique of the market, a critique that broadens calls for environmental justice and the internalization of environmental and social costs.  

In other words, fair trade.

It is not surprising on this account that Greenpeace became perhaps the most critically versed of the international environmental organizations on the ineptness of the unregulated market.  

Greenpeace formulated a critique of free market environmentalist principles in their 1992 publication “UNCED Undermined: Why Free Trade Won’t Save the Planet.” Other statements and publications pertaining to the NAFTA recognize and explicitly analyze the ways in which unregulated markets encourage capital to elevate profits by displacing costs onto nature and society.  


65While this point may not be surprising, it runs counter to the initial response by Greenpeace to the NAFTA. Rather than joining the other more moderate national environmental organizations in opposition to the NAFTA in early 1991, Greenpeace hesitated for nearly a year before fully opposing the NAFTA, due in part to financial restraints, internal divisions, and differences between Greenpeace USA and Greenpeace Mexico. It was not until 1992, when Barbara Dudley became Executive Director of the USA office, that the internal political differences on the topic of NAFTA were managed. In an abrupt shift, Greenpeace USA became a prominent figure in the fair trade efforts and would remain so throughout the NAFTA struggle.

Greenpeace activists have published numerous pieces on the NAFTA. These include, among others: “Analysis of the U.S. Proposal for an Environmental Side Agreement to the NAFTA,” June 1993; Barbara Dudley,
While a few of the larger environmental organizations linked "trade" to environmental hazards by 1992, a connection to the social consequences of free trade-induced environmental degradation emerged from the grassroots. The nature of border region development, and the necessity of engaging the issue of trade on social justice terms, forced some of the larger environmental organizations to redirect their own internal dialogues. Local expertise and grassroots organizations sought inclusion in the fair trade campaign, while several larger coalition members (such as Public Citizen and Clean Water Action) recruited anti-toxics and environmental justice groups. By early 1993, hundreds of local environmental groups participated in phone banks and rallies and signed petitions declaring the NAFTA "fundamentally flawed." Some of the larger environmental justice groups, especially Citizen's Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste and the Student Environmental Action Coalition, actively coordinated grassroots mobilizations in the fight against NAFTA.

To enter a contest with the state and neoliberal capital, some of the environmental majors versed themselves in the language of grassroots dissent and consequently became familiar with some of the assumptions of free trade and its implications for environmental justice and the discourse of sustainable development. In the process, a deeper understanding of trade, and hence the market, was constructed around grassroots' concerns for environmental justice. Reception of such a critical stance on trade and the market, however, was not warmly received in the confines of the "Group of 10" conservationists.

Yet activists within several mainstream groups worked to incorporate political economic and social justice issues. The


Efforts to link trade to environmental hazards were apparent in earlier struggles over pesticide use, food imports, and deforestation. Previous movement currents thus shaped efforts to articulate the environmental and social consequences of neoliberal trade.

Letter and petition to Ambassador Mickey Kantor, the U.S. Trade Representative under President Bill Clinton, September 13, 1993.
deployment, spread, and infusion of the meaning of environmental justice exerted influence throughout the political culture of the environmental movement, enabling the concept of “fairness” in the fair trade movement to resonate with movement participants. Indeed, the environmental justice mobilization through “fourth wave” (and supportive “third wave”) organizations, set an important context for the construction of a fair trade challenge to NAFTA, linking social justice and environmental politics. The involvement of groups representing diverse environmental constituents, such as the CCHW, Akwesasne Environmental Project, Coalition for a Liveable West Side (New York City), the Native Forest Network, the Southwest Network on Environmental Racism, and hundreds of others, brought explicitly social justice concerns to the national fair trade coalitions. Some conservationist organizations would lean toward a political cooptation of the language of environmental justice, while others, such as Friends of the Earth and Sierra Club, struggled internally to embrace the movement from below.

Globally oriented, diverse in perspective, and broadly networked within the social movement sector, the fair trade coalitions in both Mexico and the U.S. transformed the understandings and capacities of those environmental groups that sustained opposition to the NAFTA. Border issues, the high-level rhetoric of international trade, and the concerns of indigenous, labor, small farmers, women, and human rights groups exposed the NAFTA opposition to a broad horizon of social justice concerns, closely coupled with the environment. These same matters were quickly interpreted, consolidated, repackaged and distributed via daily and weekly fair trade reports to hundreds of organizations and then to millions of individuals as newsletters, electronic mail, magazines and the press. Trade, one can be sure, will remain an environmental issue, but under what terms?

4. Neoliberal Capital and the Environmental Coalition for NAFTA

Political and economic elites in Mexico and the U.S. vigorously responded to the NAFTA opposition and expended great effort to keep the environmental debate over the NAFTA confined to the language of

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economic growth. Paramount to this strategy were tactics that brought an environmentalism _into_ the language of NAFTA; a process reluctantly begun under the Bush Administration and elaborated under the Clinton Administration with the negotiation of the labor and environmental side accords. Access to the leading third wave environmental organizations was enhanced with the Clinton-Gore Administration, and, by negotiating the side accords, this access proved to be a "clincher" for the proponents of neoliberal markets.

The environmental side agreement, or North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC), stipulates "the sovereign right of States to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and development policies..."70 Numerous objectives of the agreement are aimed at promoting "sustainable development...; avoid creating trade distortions...; promote transparency and public participation in the development of environmental laws, regulations and policies; promote economically efficient and effective environmental measures...; and promote pollution prevention policies and practices."71 Leading executives of pro-NAFTA environmental groups, such as the National Wildlife Federation, declared that the side accord would "encourage public participation in resolving trade and environmental disputes...and impose trade sanctions on countries seeking to boost trade by lowering or ignoring their environmental standards."72 Indeed, Jay Hair with the NWF asserted that "there's going to be a near-term resolution of some incredibly difficult environmental degradation problems."73 Several institutional mechanisms, such as the North American Development Bank (NAD-Bank) and the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), were created under NAAEC (or alongside it) to implement these proposed objectives.

Critics quickly responded that the side accords and the institutional mechanisms for enforcement and monitoring are "a lot of talk, but no teeth...[and] punish governments not polluters."74 Two years after the

71 Ibid., p. 2.
73 Ibid., p.10.
implementation of NAFTA, the actual funding for key institutions, such as CEC and the NAD-Bank, have fallen short. Arguments in favor of the agreement by pro-NAFTA environmental organizations relied on the formation of a well-financed oversight commission and border clean-up project; they proposed between 30 and 70 million dollars to fund the CEC’s oversight of NAFTA-related environmental degradation and border clean-up.\textsuperscript{75} The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), however, has been allocated a budget of 9 million dollars (3 million dollars from each country), and will likely face further constraints on funding. Furthermore, the lending capacity of the NAD-Bank has been severely limited by the effects of the peso devaluation, further constraining the feasibility of obtaining credit by poorer communities along the border.\textsuperscript{76} In terms of implementation, the NAAEC has thus far failed to realize its objectives.

Environmentalists in the U.S. and Mexico were the first to “test” the procedural dimensions of the NAAEC and the CEC. As of late 1996, three petitions were filed with the CEC, with the later two representing organizations from all three NAFTA countries. Only the first case — involving a request to investigate the deaths of some 40,000 water fowl in a central Mexican reservoir — was accepted.\textsuperscript{77} The ruling by the CEC resulted in nothing more than a report on the deaths of these birds. Much to the dismay of the Grupo de los Cien, the report attributed cause to botulism and, while recognizing that “exposure to heavy metals, in particular chromium...was indicated in

\textsuperscript{75}Public Citizen, \textit{NAFTA's Broken Promises}, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{76}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{77}The first case filed to the CEC was pursued by representatives of two groups who leaned more often to the pro-NAFTA camp than the anti-NAFTA camp, the National Audubon Society and the \textit{Grupos de los Cien} (or Group of 100). The staff that filed the petition were among those more skeptical of the NAAEC and the decision by their leadership to support the NAFTA. The ruling by the CEC no doubt reinforced anti-NAFTA sentiments within these organizations. Both organizations opposed GATT more vigorously than they supported NAFTA (author interview, Rhona Carter, staff, National Audubon Society).
some of the birds...” downplayed the significance of industrial toxins. Moreover, the ruling by the CEC established a precedent that further narrows the scope of review under NAAEC, arguing that “failure to enforce” can only occur through administrative failure, not because the enforcement of intact environmental laws was defunded. Subsequent petitions to the CEC were met with outright rejection.

Yet, during the NAFTA-battle, the USA*NAFTA corporate coalition, numerous business and trade associations, and the Salinas and Clinton Administrations insisted that further economic growth in Mexico and the U.S. (and Canada) will lead to more prosperous and sustainable ways of life. Consistent with the preemptive environmental politics of previous ruling-party administrations, Salinas linked, tactically, the administrative functions for environmental protection, now as Secretary of Social Development (SEDESOL), with the politically strategic “antipoverty” Programa Nacional de Solidaridad (PRONASOL). This development coincided with efforts to dispel environmental opposition through Salinas’ contact with U.S.-based international conservation groups, such as the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and the World Wildlife Fund (the latter received a contract to establish a new conservation zone). The highly visible Grupo de los Cien — which worked with the pro-NAFTA NRDC and the U.S. Trade Representative to draft the Review of U.S.-Mexico Environmental Issues — and Restauracion Ambiental (a counterpart of the World Wildlife Fund), reflect clear cases where U.S.-based third-wave groups encouraged and facilitated the dissociation of several core environmental groups from prominent opposition forces in

78Commission for Environmental Cooperation, Secretariat. Migratory Bird Mortality of 1994-1995 at the Silva Reservoir. (October, 1995). The Grupos de los Cien was particulary bothered by the implications of the report, since chromium and other industrial heavy metals, which are used extensively in the cities surrounding the reservoir, were prevalent in the dead birds and in sediment samples. The Public Citizen (op. cit.) discussion of this case presents a nuanced analysis of the politics behind the report.

79For a discussion of these petitions, see, Public Citizen, NAFTA’s Broken Promises, op. cit.

80PRONASOL, Hellman argues, is an new-old strategy of PRI corporatism, enabling the current regime to deliver “very substantial material rewards to those popular groups willing to sign pacts,” Hellman, op. cit., at p. 136. For a discussion of state corporatism and environmental politics in Mexico, see Stephen Mumme, “System Maintenance and Environmental Reform in Mexico: Salinas’ Preemptive Strategy,” Latin American Perspectives, 19, 1, 1992 and David Barkin, 1991, op. cit.
Rather than opting for a social justice critique of the environmental implications of NAFTA, as did FOE and the Movimiento Ecologista Mexicano (MEM), neoliberal environmentalism prompted a conciliatory posture toward Salinas’ preemptive tactics. References were made to Salinas’ plans for new conservation zones or to efforts to reconcile environmentalist concerns in Mexico by increasing funding for environmental protection and enforcement through PRONASOL. Indeed, in efforts to “defang” more radical environmental challenges to neoliberalism in Mexico, the PRI leadership utilized their close connections with the Bush Administration (and later the Clinton Administration) and neoliberal capital in a preemptive strike to leverage support from prominent, international environmental “partnerships.” More effectively, however, the USA*NAFTA corporate coalition, with assistance from the Clinton Administration and the environmental side accord, bought environmental advocates.

By proclaiming support for the NAFTA, the “Environmental Coalition for NAFTA” charmed the corporate architects of the agreement and thus re-established close ties to neoliberal capital. For instance, in 1992 the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) “received 2.5 million dollars in a single donation from Eastman Kodak, whose C.E.O., Kay Whitmore, is co-founder of USA*NAFTA.” Further, corporate interests were expressed from within the large conservationist organizations. Kay Whitmore received a seat on the Board of Directors of WWF, and at a more general level, quoting John Audley, “what you

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82 The Salinas Administration, through the Secretaria de Comercio y Fomento Industrial (SECOFI), in anticipation of the environmental anti-NAFTA mobilization, contracted the PR firm Burson-Marsteller at 5.4 million dollars to paint a rosy picture of Mexico’s environmental reform agenda. See Bill Baldwin et al., The Trading Game: Inside Lobbying for the North American Free Trade Agreement (Washington D.C.: Center for Public Integrity).
83 Several third wave conservationist groups published positive spots on the Salinas Administration’s environmental record and concerns. A quite blatant example of neoliberal environmentalism was published in “A Conversation with Mexico’s President,” International Wildlife, September/October, 1992, a publication of the National Wildlife Federation.
see is very clear, the pro-NAFTA environmental organizations have Boards that are very corporate oriented, or heavy with [corporate] foundation support, and the anti-NAFTA environmental organizations are much more grassroots oriented...not corporate driven. It's very clear.

With less subtlety, William Reilly, the former head of Conservation Foundation and director of the EPA under President Bush, utilized his knowledge of the differences within the environmental movement. In efforts to dispel fears of a unified labor-environmental opposition, Reilly organized a meeting between the U.S. Trade Representative, Ambassador Carla Hills, and representatives from several of the major environmental organizations involved in opposing fast track legislation for the trade agreement. In an exchange of memos between Hills and Reilly, Ambassador Hills raised concerns that the environmental community was a monolithic, Greenpeace-like entity, while Reilly reassured her that “there are very conservative minds in the environmental community” and that he could help develop a positive relationship. By April, 1991, they targeted the National Wildlife Federation, Environmental Defense Fund, Nature Conservancy, Natural Resources Defense Council, and the World Wildlife Fund.

85Author interview with John Audley, October 21, 1994, Washington, D.C. John Audley worked against the NAFTA as a representative with the Sierra Club for two years and his Ph.D. dissertation analyzes the political dynamics of U.S. environmental groups in the NAFTA struggle (Environmental Interests in the North American Free Trade Agreement. [University of Maryland: Department of Political Science, 1995]).
86It is worth noting that the Conservation Foundation provided funds for the first Earth Day, despite a lack of attention by most of the other old, conservation organizations. This was in large part due to the leadership of Sydney Howe, “one of the first mainstream leaders to take a genuine interest in urban environmental issues, which he saw as inseparable from civil rights and other social justice movements. (Howe was fired by the CF board in 1973)” Dowie, op cit., p. 26. In 1972, the CF, still under Howe’s leadership, kicked off a conference that explicitly linked the ‘traditional’ issues of environmentalists to urban quality of life and social justice concerns. (See their 1972 report on the conference, Environmental Quality and Social Justice in Urban America, edited by James Noel Smith).
87The information for this argument comes from interviews with representatives who attended the March meeting or were closely involved with the activities that followed.
88These memos were referenced by John Audley in an interview on October 21, 1994.
As lobbying organizations with close dependencies to the environmental policy system, they could act as effective supporters in Congress and hence neutralize the environmentalist opposition, as they did in 1993. "We broke the back of the environmental opposition to NAFTA...," boasted John Adams, the head of the Natural Resources Defense Council. Now eager supporters of the NAFTA, the leaders of National Wildlife Federation (NWF), the Environmental Defense Fund, and Nature Conservancy used their seats on governmental trade advisory committees to "bargain" on behalf of nature in opposition to the handful of NAFTA-challengers on those same corporate-dominated committees. Audubon Society's president, Peter Berle, found reward in 1994 with a seat (alongside an executive of Allied Signal, an avowed leader in the USA*NAFTA) on the Commission for Environmental Cooperation accompanying the environmental side accord, the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation. Understanding the political character of the environmental mainstream, the offices of the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Trade Representative, under both Bush and Clinton, focused on winning the support of Jay D. Hair — the President of NWF — at a very early stage in the struggle over the NAFTA.

The seven environmental majors that formed the "Environmental Coalition for NAFTA" also reconfigured tactical and ideological splits among the national organizations. As Dowie remarked, the "discord between pro- and anti-NAFTA enviros...was perhaps the nastiest internecine squabble in the movement's hundred-year history." Exemplifying this rift, Stewart Hudson of the NWF adamantly argued before the Subcommittee on Trade that "the National Wildlife Federation, along with the National Audubon Society, the World Wildlife Fund, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Environmental Defense Fund, and Conservation International,"

89Quoted in Dowie, op cit., p. 188.
90Dowie, op cit., p. 188.
91A strange irony indeed, given that the first petition to the Commission for Environmental Cooperation was filed by dissident staff within the National Audubon Society. Perhaps this is why a "report" was released, rather than outright rejection of the petition.
92The National Wildlife Fund, along with five other organizations, have insisted that there are "Eight Essential Reasons Why NAFTA is Good For the Environment," October 1, 1993.
93Dowie, op cit., p. 187. In addition to his excellent history of the U.S. environmental movement, Mark Dowie participated in multiple forums and published several critical commentaries on "free trade and the environment."
wholeheartedly supports the NAFTA and...urges Congress to approve this vitally important agreement."94 On the other hand, a sustained exposure of the Sierra Club to movement tendencies around grassroots tactics and environmental justice was heightened, especially by working closely with Friends of the Earth, Clean Water Action, Greenpeace, and numerous grassroots environmental groups affiliated with the Citizen's Trade Campaign.

Allying with "less accommodating enviros, like Jane Perkins, former executive director of Friends of the Earth, and Barbara Dudley...at Greenpeace..." the leadership of the Sierra Club received "caustic letters" by Jay Hair.95 By aligning with groups advocating less conventional practices in the NAFTA fight, the balance of power within the Sierra Club shifted more favorably to factions that were urging a break with the clubish nature of the G-10 in 1991.96 Michelle Perrault, former president, now chair of Sierra’s board, helped maintain internal opposition to the Club’s pro-NAFTA economists in addition to representing environmental justice concerns through her common board membership on Pesticide Action Network (PAN).97 The Chair of the Sierra Club, Mike McCloskey, and Carl Pope, the Executive Director, were targeted by other G-10 environmental groups for “breaking the ranks” by allying with labor unions and the more left-leaning environmental groups. Jay Hair, expecting the Sierra Club to swing in support of the NAFTA as six other groups did, expressed betrayal and anger towards McCloskey and the Sierra Club. Hair commented, “I think the stakes are just too high for people to be into such protectionist polemics as I see coming out of the Sierra Club.”98 Further distancing the Sierra Club from previous loyalties, McCloskey affirmed their opposition, “we are not identifying ourselves in this instance with some of the other so-called mainstream groups and perhaps it does represent a repositioning of the Sierra Club.”99

95Dowie, op cit., pp. 74, 187.
96See Dowie, op cit. Also interviews with Dan Seligman, Sierra Club Trade Specialist, Washington, D.C., October, 1995.
97Michelle Perrault was also one of five environmental administrators invited by President Clinton to “balance” corporate representation on his “Council on Sustainable Development.” She was the only of the five that opposed the NAFTA (Dowie 1995, p.183). Personal interviews with Dan Seligman and John Audley, op. cit.
99Ibid.
5. Decentering North American Movements: Towards a Politics of Economic and Ecological Democracy

In Mexico, the main formative groups in opposition to the NAFTA emerged from a reorganized popular sector, which preceded and formed the populist neocardenista opposition to the hegemony of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) in 1988. Amidst an increasingly repressive state, these prior mobilizations established the political space for aggregating demands for democracy and autonomy at the national and international levels, forging an alignment between a civil front and the revolutionary movement in Chiapas. Together, these movements constitute a force that has already pushed Mexico into political crisis and will no doubt force substantial change in the workings of Mexican society. Nowhere is the evidence of a weakened PRI more clear than in the indigenous-peasant and labor sectors. Most recently, the continued wage crisis induced by neoliberal strategies of accumulation has eroded the systems of control within the PRI-controlled Confederation of Mexican Workers. Much like the recent first-contested election for AFL-CIO leadership in the U.S., the deepening rifts within the Mexican Congress of Labor (CT) indicate that the political “protection” offered by state corporatism is unraveling still further. Torrents of state violence, escalating militarization of the Mexican state, and control of the mass media, however, should remind the critical observer that the PRI’s dual-edged saber, repression and cooptation, is swung with the sharpest blade.

In the U.S., environmental organizations, at least initially, were prominent actors in constructing opposition to the NAFTA. During the late 1980s, a number of events and conjunctures contributed to a rejuvenation of sectors in the U.S. environmental movement and brought attention to trade issues. Importantly, the environmental justice grassroots movement challenged the environmental mainstream to act more responsively to the inextricable connection between social justice and environmental quality. This urgent call for justice in environmentalism enabled the concept of “fairness” in the fair trade mobilization to resonate with the more progressive wing of large environmental groups, such as Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, and, surprisingly, the Sierra Club. Fair trade thus formed a framework for applying the principles of ecological democracy to the politics of international trade.

Yet, what Dowie calls the “third wave” of environmentalism has indeed moved a substantial wing of the movement into the “boardroom,”
coupling these organizations to both the state and capital.\textsuperscript{100} With little more than a rhetorical receptivity to the emerging fourth wave of environmental justice, leading third wave groups confined large capacities of the fair trade movement to the boardrooms, courtrooms, congressional lobbies, and executive advisory boards. In particular, the “Environmental Coalition for NAFTA” and its sharp display of loyalty to capital, market-incentives, and the President, forced the large anti-NAFTA environmental groups to mobilize with more conventional tactics. For instance, by resigning the capacities of Greenpeace as a movement organization to its canvassing operations, a tactically innovative offensive was further limited. Third wave environmentalism thus constrained the political practice and visions of the fair trade campaign. Coupled with an intensification of grassroots mobilizations, however, and the fissure between the Sierra Club and the rest of the G-10, tendencies to “problematize” political practice within the movement were strengthened. Indeed, the fight over the NAFTA politicized existing fractions in North American environmentalism, created new ones, and exposed the limitations of an environmentalism subordinate to neoliberal markets and capital.

\textsuperscript{100}Dowie, \textit{op cit.}