



GLOBALISATION, MARGINALISATION & NEW SOCIAL
MOVEMENTS IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

A joint project between the Centre for Civil Society and the
School of Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal

Queries: Richard Ballard (Project Manager) · School of
Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban,
4041 ballardr@ukzn.ac.za · Tel 031 2602266 · Fax 031 2602359



Connecting the red, brown and green: The environmental justice movement in South Africa

Jacklyn Cock

2004

A case study for the UKZN project entitled: *Globalisation, Marginalisation
and New Social Movements in post-Apartheid South Africa*

This study was commissioned as part of a broader research project entitled *Globalisation, Marginalisation & New Social Movements in post-Apartheid South Africa*, a joint project between the Centre for Civil Society and the School of Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal. The project was funded primarily by the Ford Foundation and Atlantic Philanthropies whose support is gratefully acknowledged. For more information, visit: <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs/> and click on 'social movements' under 'research'.



UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

Connecting the red, brown and green: The environmental justice movement in South Africa

Jacklyn Cock

INTRODUCTION

On a hot Saturday morning in the summer of 2003 about eighty people crowded into a small garage on the outskirts of VanderByl Park. Packed closely together on wooden benches and sitting on the concrete floor, they seemed to represent our 'rainbow nation' including black workers and white small holders from the surrounding area. Despite the fresh green of the willow trees and the blue sky, it was impossible to ignore the grey slag dump dominating the skyline, as well as the smell and clouds of smoke belching from the ISCOR plant a few kilometres away.

The occasion was a meeting of the Steel Valley Crisis Committee, a group formed in 2002 to indict ISCOR for their pollution of the air and water of the area which had resulted in loss of livelihoods, and serious health problems ranging from kidney disease to cancer for 450 people. Everyone listened intently as the legal team explained what the legal processes would involve. The meeting seemed like a vindication of the triumphalist claims sometimes made about the contemporary environmental movement; an illustration of the capacity of environmental issues to overcome ethnic, racial and class divisions and unite various 'particularistic identities' in a common cause. But this paper will show that appearances can be deceptive.

The central research question this paper addresses is whether there is a single, coherent environmental movement which is mobilizing under the comprehensive banner of *environmental justice* and whether the Environmental Justice Networking Forum (EJNF) is its organizational expression. Answering this question involved site visits, focus groups, participant observation, interviews with 30 key informants selected for their expertise on environmental activism, a literature review of secondary sources and documentary analysis of the ISCOR court case, and environmental publications such as those of EJNF, Groundwork, Earthlife, the Endangered Wildlife Trust and the Wildlife and Environmental Society of Southern Africa.

The paper argues that there is no single, collective actor that constitutes the environmental movement in South Africa and no master 'frame' of environmentalism. The environmental movement has no coherent centre and no tidy margins; it is an inchoate sum of multiple, diverse, uncoordinated struggles and organizations. However it is argued that a nascent environmental justice movement is emerging which has the capacity for mass mobilization. It will be shown that this is best described as a web-like universe made up of highly interconnected networks clustered around a few key nodes or hubs, namely EJNF, Groundwork and Earthlife. It is characterized by a radical decentralization of authority, with no governing body, official ideology or mandated leaders, minimal hierarchy and horizontal forms of organizing.

This embryonic environmental justice movement is bridging ecological and social justice issues in that it puts the needs and rights of the poor, the excluded and the

marginalised at the centre of its concerns. It is located at the confluence of three of our greatest challenges: the struggle against racism, the struggle against poverty and inequality and the struggle to protect the environment, as the natural resource base on which all economic activity depends. The movement is stratified in a complex layering involving national networks, NGOs and local grassroots groups. Within this multiplicity of organizational forms, the vitality of the movement flows from the bottom up, being driven by the unemployed and lower working class, 'the poors'. This social base is distinctively different from the middle class composition of the mainstream environmental movement which focuses on curbing species loss and habitat destruction, that is on 'green' issues.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

Many analysts have emphasized that there are 'shades of green' meaning that there is no single environmentalist ideology (Oelshlaeger, 1991; Sklair, 1994; Vincent, 1992). 'Dry greens' believe in the manipulation of the market place through benign self regulation; 'shallow greens' criticize this reinforcing of the status quo and focus on community based reform, eco-auditing and environmentally benign consumerism; 'deep greens' reject 'the culture-ideology of consumerism and the whole global capitalism project' (Sklair, 1994: 218). At the same time mobilization around the 'brown' environmental issues of urban pollution, sanitation, water, electricity and waste removal is increasing. The programme with mass appeal could be described as 'red-green-brown' in the sense of linking urban and rural environmental activism to struggles for social justice. This diversity challenges Castells's argument that 'there is an implicit, coherent, ecological discourse that cuts across various political orientations and social origins within the movement and that provide the framework from which different themes are emphasized at different moments and for different purposes' (Castells, 1997: 122).

The lack of such a framework is evident in the diversity of environmental struggles in South Africa. There is no master frame of 'environmental issues' encoded in any blueprint; no overarching ideology on which all agree. The mobilizing issues are health and rights, not environmental justice or sustainability. Even struggles over access to natural resources such as water are not framed as environmental struggles. According to one key informant this is because 'the environmental rights in the South African constitution are framed in health terms. You don't go to a poor community and talk about the environment, you talk about health. The environment has no rhetorical power. The discourse is about health and rights. Water for example is a health issue and a rights issue. . . There is a failure to conceptualize environmental issues because of the constitutional framing of the environment in health terms and the legacy of authoritarian, wildlife conservation' (Interview, Munnik 2004).

Overall, the term 'environmental issues' has generated a diversity of mutually exclusive and sometimes antagonistic claims, what Harvey terms a 'confusing multiplicity of discourses' (Harvey, 1997: 372). Informants from different communities cited very different priority environmental issues ranging from aids in Ivory Park, to the presence of sewage and human waste in water in Alexandra, illegal dumping, waste, land restitution, mining, industrial agriculture, genetic engineering, animal rights, intellectual property, nuclear energy, military activity as one of the most destructive environmental forces, corporate accountability, asbestos related illnesses,

soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, poaching, overpopulation, drought, air pollution and climate change. Access to clean water and energy were the issues most frequently cited. Limited access to electricity means that many of the poor turn to burning solid and liquid fuels in poorly ventilated homes. This creates high levels of indoor air pollution and contributes to deforestation in the peri-urban areas as well as outdoor air pollution with serious health impacts such as asthma, bronchitis and lung cancers.

Some of the most exciting forms of new social activism in post-apartheid South Africa are focused on these 'brown' or urban environmental issues. As McDonald writes, 'The lack of basic services like sewage and sanitation for millions of urban South Africans is arguably the most pressing environmental justice problem in the country today' (McDonald, 2002: 10). There are also grassroots movements organizing around 'green' issues such the restitution of land and access to the sustainable use of wildlife. An important example is the Makuleke community who have established a partnership with the South African National Parks to manage the land they were removed from in the 1960s. There are a number of local community groups organizing around both conservation and job creation through eco-tourism (Interview, Koch 2004).

While grassroots struggles involving high levels of popular participation are increasing they are not generally framed as environmental justice struggles. This pattern is not distinctive to South Africa. Harvey (1997) cites a study of the Chipko 'tree-hugging' movement in the Himalayas against commercial logging which shows that 'the most celebrated "environmental movement" in the Third World is viewed by its participants as being above all a peasant movement in defence of traditional rights in the forest and only secondarily, if at all, an "environmental" or "feminist" movement' (Harvey, 1997: 187). Similarly when members of Concerned Citizens approached mainstream environmental groups in the US such as the Sierra Club or the Environmental Defense Fund about the poisoning of an urban community by an incineration facility they were told the issue was 'a community health issue, not an environmental one' (DiChiro, 1998: 121). Most of the actors in local grassroots struggles do not call themselves 'environmentalists'. It could be that this is a somewhat stigmatized identity, due to the legacy of the authoritarian conservation movement. (In similar terms many women committed to gender equality are reluctant to describe themselves as 'feminists' because of its association with white, middle class concerns).

There is no common understanding shared by all members even within a single organization or campaign. For example a key informant from Earthlife Africa wanted electricity to be more expensive to lessen pollution from our coal burning power stations, but at the same time some people in Diepsloot are joining in the anti-nuclear campaign driven by Earthlife on the basis that nuclear energy will make electricity more expensive. Some members of the Coalition Against Water Privatization are demanding free water as a basic human need and right, or a flat rate, which other participants believe to be not environmentally sustainable. One key informant claimed that 'to some water is simply a means to mobilize people against the government. For them the issue is a socialist revolution, not access to water' (Interview, anonymous 2004). What unites participants in the Coalition is their opposition to pre-paid water meters which is having devastating health and social impacts on poor communities (See case study described below). At the same time some members of middle class communities are demanding the installation of pre-paid water meters as a solution to chaotic billing from the Johannesburg City Council.

Several informants preferred speaking of an 'environmental lens' rather than 'environmental issues'. 'Environmentalism is a perspective on everything, the relation between people and resources, production and consumption. . . It's all encompassing Talking about environmental issues is wrong' (Interview, Hallowes, 2003). Another stressed, 'Environmental issues are about power and pollution There is an environmental dimension to everything' (Interview, Peek 2003).

Such divergent understandings reflect the fragmented nature of environmental activism in South Africa, a fragmentation which according to several informants, has deepened since 1994. ' . . . the mainstream environmental movement is still about wildlife conservation. Organizations like the Endangered Wildlife Trust have taken on board brown environmental issues but the brown agenda is tacked on like gender issues were simply added what has changed is the emergence of the environmental justice movement' (Interview, McDonald, 2003). Another statement of this fragmentation refers to how 'The divide between green and brown conceptually remains very strong and there is an absence of champions who understand the need to integrate the two and re-define environmentalism in new terms that brings together economic development, social needs and the striving for a pleasant and healthy relation to natural forces'. (Freund, 1999: 21).

A few such 'champions' are now emerging and several informants stressed the inter-connection between brown and green issues. 'You can't separate brown and green issues; they complement each other. The environment is not only about brown issues. The conservation and welfare of animals is important. The environment is not only about dumping and pollution, it's very important to have protected areas and national parks, our children need to learn about what creatures live in Africa' (Interview, Mentoer 2003). Another informant criticized the 'compartmentalism' in environmental thinking, 'I hate separating green and brown issues. Both are about people and the environment (Interview, Black, 2003).

Nevertheless the fragmentation of the broad environmental movement in South Africa involves a fault line which divides the movement into two main streams: those organized around the discourse of sustainable development, and those organized around the discourse of environmental justice. Both of these are powerful discursive strategies. The discourse of sustainable development is an advance on earlier protectionist models of environmentalism in that it is concerned with human needs, but it is generally marked by technicist, pragmatic and reformist attempts to bring environmental externalities into the marketplace through ecological modernization. The concept has been extensively criticized for the vagueness which has enabled it to be incorporated into neo-liberal approaches (Bond, 2002; Sachs, 1999). It can mean that environmentalism is voided of political content and 'be defined as a public concern with environmental deterioration - a concern, not necessarily the object of a social struggle, a cause without conflict' (Acselrad, 2002: 18).

Two South African environmental NGOs are the organizational expressions of this approach, the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) and the Wildlife and Environment Society of Southern Africa (WESSA) Both are socially shallow with a mainly white, middle class support base and are predominantly concerned with preserving biodiversity. EWT is a significant environmental NGO with about 6,000 members.

Membership fees fund the organization's administrative costs to the amount of about R1 m. The budget of their 23 working groups amounts to about R15 m and is totally dependent on corporate funds. 'EWT operates by forming strategic partnerships with large corporations' (Interview, van Zyl, 2004). The other organization that is firmly located within the sustainable development discourse is WESSA with some 20,000 members. WESSA's vision is 'to strengthen our effectiveness as an independent, non-government organization, working to achieve a South Africa which is wisely managed by all to ensure long-term environmental sustainability'. There is no reference in the statement of their mission, aim or style to environmental justice.

The discourse of environmental justice provides a radical alternative, questioning the market's ability to bring about social or environmental sustainability. As the leading US anti-toxics activist, Lois Gibbs has argued, the growing environmental justice movement asks the question 'What is morally correct?' instead of 'What is legally, scientifically, and pragmatically possible?' The difference between the two approaches can be illustrated by the different responses to corporate power on the part of EWT and a key, environmental justice organization, Groundwork. While EWT relies on corporate sponsorship, Groundwork has developed a critical approach demanding corporate accountability. It is one of the key environmental justice organizations which have brought about a reconfiguration of the discourse on environmentalism.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: a reconfiguration of the discourse on environmentalism

During the apartheid regime environmentalism operated effectively as a conservation strategy that neglected social needs (Beinart and Coates, 1995; Butler and Hallows, 1998; Kahn, 1990; Mittelman, 1998; Ramphela, 1991). The notion of environmental justice represents an important shift away from this traditional authoritarian concept of environmentalism which was mainly concerned with the conservation of threatened plants, animals and wilderness areas, to include urban, health, labour and development issues (Cock, 1991). It is linked to social justice as 'an all-encompassing notion that affirms the use value of life, all forms of life, against the interests of wealth, power and technology' (Castells, 1997: 132).

This concept of environmental justice as a mobilizing force emerged in the US in the last forty years, in opposition to practices that were classified as environmental racism. This is defined as 'any policy, practice or directive that differentially affects or disadvantages (whether intentionally or unintentionally) individuals, groups or communities based on race or color' (Bullard, 2002: 16). Several informants stressed the relevance of the concept in post-apartheid South Africa. 'Black people are still trapped in the townships and living with the legacy of the past with no proper housing or sanitation, or electricity' (Interview, Menteur 2003).

In this context the concept of environmental justice potentially provides an organizing tool for mobilizing multiple, diverse communities into political action. As Castells writes, 'Campaigns against toxic waste dumping, consumer rights, anti-nuclear protests . . . and a number of other issues have merged with the defence of nature to root the movement in a wide landscape of rights and claims' (Castells, 1997: 132). In South Africa some of these rights have a constitutional grounding as the Bill of Rights Section 24 states that 'everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to

their health or well being' and this right is given effect through the National Environmental Management Act. The core of the notion of environmental justice as a powerful mobilizing force lies in this notion of rights - rights of access to natural resources and to decision making. The notion of rights is used to legitimize demands and claims. The counter-hegemonic potential lies in the challenge to power relations that this notion of rights implies.

The concept of environmental justice was first introduced in South Africa at the Earthlife 1992 conference. 'It was articulated as a black concept and a poor concept and it took root very well' (Interview, Munnik, 2004). While it emerged from the US there are important differences in the South African adaptation of the concept. Here the focus is on total change driven by majority rather than minority interests, and includes class issues, whereas in the US it is class-blind, focusing exclusively on environmental racism. Also the movement here frequently addresses the root causes of environmental degradation - processes such as privatization and deregulation - whereas the US focus is on symptoms. In the South African context environmental justice means social transformation directed to meeting basic human needs and rights. It is the central idea in a nascent grassroots movement which is fuelled by the growing contradiction between the discourse of rights and the experience of unmet needs.

Organizational diversity is a key characteristic of this emerging movement. It has been claimed that the absence of a single organizational expression is characteristic of the multi-agency character of modern social movements. As Hunt writes, 'a most important feature of contemporary social movements is that they rarely, if ever, take a single organizational expression . . . they are characterized by their multiplicity of organizational expressions' (Hunt, 1997: 238). This diversity is also understood by Castells to be characteristic of a new kind of social movement. He argues that 'Collective action, politics and discourses grouped under the name of environmentalism are so diverse as to challenge the idea of a movement', and goes on to claim that 'it is precisely this cacophony of theory and practice that characterizes environmentalism as a new form of decentralized, multiform, network-oriented, pervasive social movement' (Castells, 1997: 112). While there is this 'cacophony' of multiple voices 'no tune is likely to be sung in unison' (Bauman, 2001: 124). However a single tune is beginning to emerge from a few key nodes or hubs which provide organizational resources to a nascent environmental justice movement. The following three organizations operate at different levels and show how this movement is growing in terms of geographic spread, political reach and social cohesiveness.

KEY NODES OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT

(i) The Environmental Justice Networking Forum

This is potentially the organizational expression of a coherent, comprehensive environmental justice movement in South Africa. It describes itself as a 'democratic network, a shared resource a forum which seeks to advance the interrelatedness of social, economic, environmental and political issues to reverse and prevent environmental injustices affecting the poor and the working class' (Interview Madihlaba, 2003). It aims to achieve this through 2 broad inter-connected programmes - environmental governance and community campaigns. Environmental governance focuses on issues of policy while the campaigns focuses on 'direct intervention to solve the immediate problems affecting poor communities' (Interview Madihlaba 2003). The

areas of focus for the two programmes are mining and ecological debt, energy, food security and waste.

EJNF was initiated at a conference hosted by Earthlife Africa in 1992 on the theme 'What does it mean to be green in South Africa.' At this conference 325 civil society delegates resolved to redefine the environmental agenda in South Africa. We agreed that 'ongoing cross-sectoral cooperation was required to redefine and transform the dominant middle-class, alienating and conservative understanding of environment' (*The Networker*, no 14, Winter, 1997 p. 4). Two years later in 1994, EJNF was launched to mobilize people around the notion of environmental justice. The theme of this conference was 'Greening the RDP' and it focused on 6 major policy areas, land, water, waste and sanitation, housing, industry and mining. Out of 34 plenary speakers, 15 were black. The conference organizer, Dave Hallows said at the time, 'will bring together the rainbow alliance of the rainbow nation' (*The Networker*, no3, Spring 1994 p. 3).

From the outset there was a clear and strong commitment to social transformation through an expanded conception of environmental justice. According to the EJNF Charter, 'Environmental Justice is about social transformation directed towards meeting basic human needs and enhancing our quality of life - economic quality, health care, housing, human rights, environmental protection, and democracy. In linking environmental and social justice issues the environmental justice approach seeks to challenge the abuse of power which results in poor people having to suffer the effects of environmental damage caused by the greed of others'.

To signal a decisive break with the dominant, narrow, authoritarian conservationism, the pioneer founder Chris Albertyn promoted a very inclusive understanding of the environment. ' . . . the environment is not just areas of natural beauty but it is in fact the place where we are - the environment includes our workplace, home, hostel, town, village and city as well as areas of natural beauty. Thinking of the environment in these broad terms makes it clear that SA's high infant mortality rates, industrial accidents, road and mining accident deaths, violence and township pollution are all environmental issues' (Albertyn, 1995: 9).

Environmental Justice was elaborated as a way of thinking about environment and development which provided tools for organizing around these different issues. These were viewed as deeply political in the sense that they are embedded in the unequal access to power and resources in society. A 1998 EJNF leaflet cites four examples of environmental injustice including 'rural women's lack of easy access to water and energy sources; the situation of polluting industries and waste dumps in urban areas where poor people live and suffer from pollution related illnesses; the neglect of worker health and safety through dirty production processes; and the increasing concentration of the ownership and control of resources on a global scale. This means that fewer people control more resources. The rich get richer while the poor get poorer in all countries, north and south. This is environmental injustice' (EJNF, 1988).

While elaborating this radical, re-worked conception of environmentalism, difficulties generated through phenomenal growth and problems in the relations between head office and participating organizations came to a head in 1998. Different informants gave different account of this 'crash'. An insider was insistent that 'there was a lot of

racial tension at the time, a feeling that whites would have to prove their loyalties to the National Steering Committee, chaired by Zac Mabilitsa, or be viewed with suspicion . . . there was a lot of bitterness among whites in EJNF at the time. Many felt they could no longer continue working in EJNF' (Interview, anonymous, 2003).

Zac Mabilitsa supports this interpretation of a racialised challenge on the grounds that, 'The six most powerful people in EJNF were white, but most of the 550 participating organizations were black' (Interview, Mabilitsa, 2004). However an analysis of the quarterly EJNF publication, *The Networker* before 1998 shows high levels of black involvement in leadership roles in provincial steering committees and many workshop participants and provincial steering committees had a black majority. For example, in 1997 all 14 members of the OFS Provincial Steering Committee (PSC) were black as were all 14 members of the Mpumalanga PSC; 6 out of 7 members of the Gauteng PSC were black; 9 out of 10 members of the Eastern Cape PSC were black; all 8 members of the North West PSC and 9 out of 11 members of the KZN PSC elected in September 1997 were black.

Other key informants stressed structural problems in the relationship between head office and participating organizations, and the problem of scale. 'It grew too quickly to be controlled by the pioneer founder. The provincial structures introduced a new dynamic and there was tension between the individualist activist dynamic with a global perspective and a community focus' (Interview, anonymous, 2004).

The shift in focus and leadership since 1998 illustrates key themes of the politics of race. One informant stressed that there are 'real differences . . . We have different styles and there are socio-economic as well as cultural differences. Often white activists come from professional backgrounds. They have money, jobs and education, they read a lot. Young, black activists have none of that. Conflicts then surface around issues of salaries and working hours. The activists live in different worlds, and have different realities, for example travelling time to work is an issue for black activists, evening meetings are difficult. Environmental activism has to deal with these things which often get bypassed' (Interview, Munnik, 2004). EJNF is now 'a firmly black-led organization', as one informant stressed, and the network and its participant organizations are playing a key role in popularizing the concept of environmental justice, mobilizing grassroots action in lobbying for appropriate policies and participating in environmental governance.

At present it is a nation-wide umbrella alliance of over 400 participating organizations characterized by an ideological and social diversity, and including COSATU and many of its affiliate organizations, women's, youth, rural and faith-based organizations, as well as civics, NGOs, and CBOs, Lawyers for Human Rights, a Traditional Healers Association, as well as some of what the director terms 'capacitated' environmental POs. It has provincial executive committees in all 9 provinces, 8 provincial offices and 15 full time paid staff. Thabo Madihlaba was appointed the national director in 2002 and is an important source of continuity within the organization, having been elected chair of EJNF Limpopo province in 1994. Key decisions are made at bi-annual national conferences.

The organization was particularly active in the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD), using the process to emphasize how poor and marginalised

people are the worst victims of environmental abuse and the need to formulate positions which promote the linkages between social justice, environmental degradation and sustainable development. EJNF facilitated the attendance of more than 150 delegates from its grassroots participating organizations at the summit. Throughout its participation in the WSSD process there was a high level of co-operation between EJNF and other organizations such as Earthlife Africa, the Group for Environmental Monitoring, Groundwork and with international organizations such as Friends of the Earth, the World Resource Institute, the African Initiative on Minerals, Environment and Society (AIMES), the National Black Environmental Justice Network from the US, the Citizens for Environmental Justice (US) and the Third World Network. Through these connections which link the global and the local, a solid infrastructure for environmental justice is being built.

Participation in the WSSD was clearly a radicalizing experience for EJNF. Afterwards the organization resolved that the way forward included lobbying the G8 to pay reparations, campaigning against the privatization of natural resources and public entities fighting against corruption both in governments and in multinational corporations, forming strategic alliances with other progressive platforms, and campaigning against GEAR, NEPAD and the WTO. The WSSD demonstrated a growing solidarity between social justice and environmental justice activists. EJNF played a significant role in the Social Movements Indaba which is deepening this solidarity among grassroots activists. According to the National Director of EJNF, 'The SMI has a lot of potential; EJNF is one of the major role players; it is well positioned to bring the social movements together though there is a problem of image, we must hit the government with facts in a reasonable way' (Interview, Madihlaba, 2003).

EJNF operates at multiple levels; it is increasingly connected to global civil society, and according to Madihlaba 'many comrades went to the World Social Forum who are members of the networks' (Interview, Madihlaba, 2003). In South Africa activities have both reached down into grassroots communities, as well as up into provincial and national government policy and decision making levels. It presents a 'bottom up' grassroots perspective on environmental injustice by giving voice to vulnerable communities in workshops, policy arenas and through its quarterly publication, *The Networker*. An analysis of this publication over the 10 year period demonstrates an engagement with a wide range of environmental issues with accessible articles on a range of 'brown' environmental issues. There is a silence on 'green' issues of conserving biodiversity but 'this does not mean they aren't important issues. Its just that other organizations are dealing with them also for the government; the brown issues are more controversial; the government's neo-liberal mentality is the problem' (Interview, Madihlaba, 2003).

Many articles in *The Networker* demonstrate an analytical depth focusing on causes rather than symptoms of environmental injustice. For example, an article by the former EJNF community campaigns coordinator points out that '. . . most people believe they have to 'recycle waste' but they never question why there is so much waste . . . People clean up the rivers but never question what makes the rivers dirty' (Manqele, 1997: 14). There are profiles of black environmental activists and the publication demonstrates how EJNF has provided a training ground for black environmental leadership, such as Maria Mbengashe who became chief director of environmental

affairs for the Eastern Cape government after serving on EJNF's national steering committee.

Informants varied in their assessment of the capacity of EJNF. One said, 'It should be more visible, it should be more of a public presence. Their weakness is at the advocacy level. We need to see more engagement in the form of briefing papers to parliamentarians for example' (Interview, anonymous, 2003). A contradictory comment was that EJNF 'is not doing enough grassroots work, there's too much of a policy focus, we need tangible projects . . . environmental justice is a new concept that came with this new democracy. EJNF hasn't done enough to unpack the concept to the broader community . . . EJNF is supposed to be a voice for the people, but it's not strong enough' (Interview Mentoor, 2003). While one informant described it as 'weak' another said, 'EJNF is still a good organisation, it still pulls in people. So in every black community there are environmental groups now. . . The township youth are keen on environmental issues, though they only see biodiversity in relation to ecotourism (Interview, Sugre, 2003). Another praised its political style, 'It is characterized by a very broad inclusively; there is no ideological litmus test. What's especially valuable is that they've maintained their independence from the ANC' (Interview, Worthington, 2003).

EJNF continues to bring together a diverse range of participating organizations, such as Soweto's Mountain of Hope (SOMOH). Founded by the former EJNF Gauteng co-ordinator, Mandla Mentoor in 2001, this project is transforming the rocky Tshiawelo koppie in Soweto which was a feared crime and litter-ridden space into a green project as a continuation of the 80s peace-park movement. Mentoor emphasizes that 'open spaces are a key environmental justice issue . . . but the traditional conception of the environment is an elusive concept to many communities . . . Environmental activists should learn to build on "who people are" and how communities express themselves as an entry point for transmitting environmental messages and action. Provide the space for communities to jive, if that's what they want to do, and use their needs as a point of mobilization' (Interview, Mentoor, 2003). SOMOH does that through livelihood creation (such as recycling and a marimba band), interactive tourism, clean-up campaigns and environmental education.

This is a concrete expression of the linkages between environmental and social justice issues which EJNF emphasizes. 'One can't separate environmental and development issues like access to water. Social justice and environmental justice go together, they are interlinked; environmental justice is part of social justice but not the other way round . . . The framing of issues doesn't matter that much . . . People have the right to natural resources like water and land; there is a focus on natural resources, this is what defines environmental justice. You can't separate land, water and air, all are natural resources that people have a right to' (Interview, Madihlaba, 2003).

Over the 10 years of its existence EJNF has changed a good deal. In its pioneering phase, the period 1994 - 1998, the emphasis was policy formulation in close collaboration with the state. It played a major role in the Consultative National Environmental Policy Process (CONNPEP) and followed it thorough to the publication of the National Environmental Management Bill. It experienced what one informant described as a 'capacity crash' or crisis in 1998 when growth led to structural tensions which became racialised. Since then the focus has shifted to grassroots campaigning,

its ideology has become increasingly racialised and, as a key component of the Social Movements Indaba, relations with the ANC and the post-apartheid state have become increasingly confrontational.

Relations with the state is one of two major challenges now facing EJNF. Its relationship with the post-apartheid state is contradictory involving both engagement and confrontation. The National Director believes that one of the 'main challenges facing EJNF is firstly how do we position ourselves to engage with the state. Do we take a confrontational approach? The state is increasingly intolerant of civil society; how do we deal with that? Marching, picketing, campaigning and lobbying to get the state to change are all tactics of a broader campaign; the state's growing antagonism is making them closed' (Interview, Madihlaba, 2003). This question is generating tensions within the SMI. Madihlaba also stresses that, 'relations with trade unions are important - they think we threaten the job security of workers, this is a wrong mentality inculcated by the bosses. One of our challenges is to link more firmly to the labour movement' (Interview, Madihlaba, 2003).

Overall, by naming the experiences of the poor and the marginalised and drawing out from those experiences the connections between power, development, rights and social and environmental justice EJNF has made a major contribution to the reconfiguration of the discourse on environmentalism in South Africa. It is building the social infrastructure for a strong environmental justice movement in South Africa in collaboration with other key organizations such as Groundwork.

(ii) Groundwork

The second node in the embryonic environmental justice movement in South Africa is Groundwork (GW), a non-profit, environmental justice service and development organization. It was founded in 1999 by 3 ex-EJNF activists to improve the quality of life of vulnerable people in Southern Africa. It has four main projects focusing on air quality, health care waste and incineration, industrial landfills and corporate accountability. The organization makes no claims to speak on behalf of others; nor does it claim to represent the environmental justice movement. 'We are not defining the agenda, we don't want to control it, we're trying to participate in it' (Interview, Peek, 2003).

Many informants value GW as providing a link with local communities, transmitting information to them as well as ensuring that the larger processes are informed by local knowledge and interests. 'Groundwork is playing a crucial role in forwarding the brown agenda. It's the most effective environmental justice organization, focusing on pollution hotspots' (Interview, anonymous, 2003). 'Groundwork is the lead NGO on air pollution, oil refineries incineration and toxics' (Interview, anonymous, 2004). It provides crucial support to about 12 different communities and a number of community based organizations including the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA) led by Desmond D'Sa which it helped to establish. This is one of the most active community environmental groups in the country, involving 14 organizations, including Earthlife Africa eTekwini, and has mobilized around the health and social impacts of industrial pollution in the South Durban basin.

The issue of air pollution illustrates the capacity of the organization both to reach down into grassroots levels in a way that empowers and strengthens capacity, as well as up

into policy making circles. For example they facilitated submissions from the Boipatong Environmental Committee on the proposed Air Quality Bill arguing that the Bill failed to adequately protect communities exposed to hazardous air borne chemicals. The Boipatong Environmental Committee has about 25 members and works closely with GW. Similarly the Sasolburg Environmental Committee which the secretary, Caroline Ntaopane described as ‘a baby of Groundwork’ illustrates the capacity of the organization to empower communities. Residents in Sasolburg with the help of GW formed the Sasolburg Environmental Committee and started the bucket brigade campaign in 2000 where, through a simple method using a bucket, they can monitor industrial pollution. The bucket system, according to GW’s Ardiel Soeker, is a ‘community empowerment tool’. Air samples taken by community volunteers are then sent to various laboratories for analysis. The air monitoring project thus ‘combines scientific evidence with people’s daily experience’ (Ardiel Soeker, 2004 Groundwork workshop). It demonstrated devastating health impacts in Sasolburg. ‘Sasol is undermining the health of our people, we suffer from skin and eye irritations, and asthma, there is black dust in the mornings . . . Sasol don’t take us seriously so we must fight for environmental justice’ (Caroline Ntoapane, 2004).

GW’s pioneering research has been very influential at the policy level. In 2003 their report on community-based air pollution monitoring was presented which draws together the findings of the bucket brigade air samples and community air sampling programmes in three identified pollution hotspots, namely South Durban, Cape Town and Sasolburg. For the first time community research is captured in a document that will be updated annually to monitor industrial pollution. The report will be used by communities to lobby government to force industry to clean up its act. Another influential research document is GW’s comparative study of oil refineries in South Durban and Denmark.

GW is a very small organization, with only 4 employed staff. It believes in both engagement and challenge to the state. ‘We have challenged the state in court on incinerators, but at the same time we are assisting the Kwa-Zulu Department of Health on healthcare waste management . . . We have made the KZN’s provincial government aware of a range of planning issues such as the proximity of industrial hazards to people’ (Interview Peek 2003). The parliamentary portfolio committee is appreciative of GW as it facilitates their access to local communities, as well as facilitating community access to parliament, and finds GW a source of reliable information. GW also facilitates the legal services of the Legal Resources Centre to communities. It has redirected DEAT’s strategy for pollution control; has gained publicity for community issues; provided community access to decision makers; and combines science and policy work with action. However the director believes that ‘The crucial task is to take the environmental debate into the social movements, that’s where the energy is’ (Interview, Peek, 2003). It tries to do so partly through the distribution of some 1 000 copies of publications, important for their accessibility and analysis, of the relation between pollution and the neo-liberal policy framework.

Like EJNF, GW works at multi-levels, local, regional, national and global. It is affiliated to Friends of the Earth International and is linked into many international campaigns such as those against Dow Chemicals and Shell. It was very active in the WSSD process campaigning for the recognition and inclusion of the principle of corporate accountability. ‘The corporate accountability campaign will direct our

energy and resources against the real enemy, the corporations' (Interview, Peek, 2003). Their Corporate Accountability week preceding the WSSD had community representatives from around the country working with international NGOs such as Friends of the Earth, Corpwatch and Greenpeace. The week ended with the Greenwash Academy Awards. GW has hosted several international gatherings and skills exchanges, and has developed solidarity networks between civil society in several Southern African countries to create a unified front to bring about environmental justice in Southern Africa. Earthlife Africa has the same objectives.

(iii) Earthlife

Another key node in the environmental justice movement is one of EJNF's participating organizations, Earthlife Africa (ELA). This is a loose, nationwide alliance of volunteer activists, grouped into local branches. It describes itself as a civil society organization working for social and environmental justice on local, national and international levels. Earthlife was started in 1988 by a group of students who were inspired by Greenpeace and 'outraged by injustice'. It is membership based with different branches, once as many as 13 now down to 4. According to an office bearer, 'People were brought together by their beliefs and convictions, but we are presently in decline. Pietermaritzburg had over 400 members at one time. There's no time for volunteer stuff now. We are predominantly white and middle class but less so in the Western Cape, the lines between EJNF and Earthlife are blurred there. We are affiliated to EJNF and have made a lot of international connections through them' (Interview, anonymous, 2003). It is a flat, non-hierarchical, decentralized organisation, which one member described as 'democratic to the point of inertia' (Interview, anonymous, 2003). It produces and distributes a newsletter, and has monthly meetings at which five different action groups: toxics group, nuclear, zero waste, animal action and climate change report. There are office bearers, elected at an annual AGM.

According to one informant, 'Earthlife is non-political, though we used to be closer to the ANC. The CONNEP process was the ideal way of working with government; now it's frustrating to interact with government. Our relationship with the state involves formal, shallow consultation. We're best at protest actions. In 1998 we organized a picket at Durban harbour against the nuclear waste ship. Our main problem is that we've been too busy trying to change the world to worry about our membership' (Interview, anonymous, 2003). The organization is known for their very imaginative tactics. For example in the 1998 campaign against air pollution in Johannesburg three prominent sculptures were decorated with gas masks. They disseminate information on issues such as climate change, genetic engineering and nuclear energy.

The Toxics Campaign focuses mainly on the prevention of proposed incinerators, through input into EIAs. This is done in collaboration with other organizations, such as Groundwork, EJNF, WESSA, the Legal Resources Centre and the Sasolburg Environmental Committee. Working together they prevented the construction of a hazardous waste incinerator in Sasolburg which would have been the largest in Southern Africa. The Earthlife Africa Johannesburg Summer newsletter of 2002 claimed that the anti-incineration struggle was victorious in stopping incinerators at Tambo and Tembisa Hospitals. A key project of Earthlife Africa is the Sustainable Energy and Climate Change Partnership (SECCP) with WWF Denmark. The project aims to link renewable energy and energy efficiency to advocacy around climate change, to influence relevant development policies. The importance of this work is

difficult to exaggerate as South Africa ‘contributes more to global warming than nearly any economy in the world if CO₂ emissions are corrected for both income and population’ (Bond, 2004: 16). The project gives an environmental justice lens to the problem of climate change, which most of the technical and scientific literature fails to do. SECCP reports a growing and more representative membership of the Southern African Climate Action Network (SACAN).

Earthlife launched the People’s Environmental Centre, the Greenhouse in 2002. The aim is to provide resources for grassroots organizations ‘on how to deal with environmental issues on the ground’ (Interview, Black, 2003). It operates as a centre of green practice inspiring and educating the people of greater Johannesburg. In the building materials, use of energy, space and waste, the building provides ‘workable alternatives to wasteful and polluting technologies which are currently used’ (Interview, Black, 2003).

Earthlife’s anti-nuclear campaign demonstrates its capacity to both reach down into grassroots communities, particularly those living in the vicinity of Pelindaba such as Atteridgeville and Diepsloot and up into policy work such as making parliamentary submissions and attending public hearings on the Draft Radioactive Waste Bill. Strategies include producing a popular book, meeting with the national nuclear regulator, mobilizing health professionals to undertake an epidemiological study of communities living near Pelindaba, court action arguing that the environmental impact assessment was flawed as well as demonstrations. The campaign is working with EJNF to create an anti-nuclear alliance and is making ‘strong efforts to involve the trade unions, particularly COSATU and NUM’ (Interview, Palane, 2003).

The organization is marked by social cohesion and solidarity. A key informant described the Johannesburg branch as ‘like a family. We spend time together socially. There’s a strong sense of solidarity, a sense of identity. Increasingly a lot of interest is coming from township women and youth concerned with nutrition and health issues’ (Interview, anonymous, 2003). However there is also a sense of being marginalised. ‘The notion of environmental justice is being sidelined by the powers that be . . . The empowered are not prepared to sacrifice for the future. The American I/me culture is growing; this is the opposite of environmental justice which is a collective notion. The average white person doesn’t want to know about environmental atrocities. There’s no mass-based movement for environmental justice; the current message is development at all costs. If you’re championing NEPAD the last thing you want is environmental justice. NEPAD won’t measure against any criterion of environmental justice . . . The notion of environmental justice challenges powerful interests’ (Interview, Lakhani, 2003). For this reason several informants stressed that the most important challenge is to connect environmental justice issues more strongly to the labour movement. The potential of closer linkages lies in the South African tradition of social movement unionism which involves struggles over wages and working conditions, but also over living conditions in working-class areas.

As an organization Earthlife is very small, but it is a crucial node in the environmental justice movement in South Africa and central in networking around climate change, nuclear and energy issues. It has been described as ‘a good organization, cosy but exclusive’ (Interview, anonymous, 2003). Along with EJNF it played a crucial role in

several iconic moments which helped to generate a reconfiguration of the discourse on environmentalism in South Africa.

One such moment was the exposure of pollution by Thor Chemicals, a corporation which imported toxic waste into South Africa, by Earthlife and EJNF. They worked closely with the Legal Resources Centre, the Chemical Workers Industrial Union, affected workers and local communities. The case illustrates the importance of alliances between environmentalists and organized labour and according to Barnett (2003), was the crucial turning point in the re-framing and 'browning' of environmentalism in South Africa.

The Chloorkop campaign against the siting of a toxic waste dump in Chloorkop between 1993 and 1996 was another watershed event. The lead organization was the EJNF affiliate, Earthlife Africa and involved the establishment of a broad coalition which included the Tembisa branch of the ANC, the PAC, the Transport and General Workers Union, the Democratic Party as well as the AWB. 'When at a meeting in May 1993 the ANC chairman in Tembisa, Bengeza Mthombini announced the ANC planned to mobilize thousands of its support base, an AWB delegate shouted, "Can we toyi toyi with you" to a wide round of applause' (Phadu, 1997: 15). The struggle involved a die-in campaign; a signature campaign which included President Mandela's signature; a 5,000 strong march and a media campaign. According to a participant, 'the Chloorkop campaign was a rainbow group organized against environmental injustice' (Interview, Sugre, 2003).

The ANC branch in Tembisa played a very active role which illustrates how established organizations may be a source of resources facilitating movement emergence. But, as Camacho emphasizes, 'political opportunities and resource mobilization only offer the potential for collective action which depends on subjective meanings' (Camacho, 1998: 25). People must collectively define their situation as unjust and vulnerable to change through group action. In these terms, the South African Youth Congress played a major role in the third iconic moment. This was the Mafefe asbestos exposure in which EJNF and specifically Chris Albertyn played a crucial part. Blue asbestos is a cancer-causing fibre that was mined for decades with little regard for the health and safety of mine workers and adjacent communities. Research in Mafefe undertaken by Zac Mabilitsa and Marianne Felix demonstrated the devastating health impacts of asbestos mining on the village, and was part of a struggle which 'combined research with advocacy and grassroots mobilization' (Interview, Felix, 2003).

These three iconic 'moments' provided the impetus to a growing grassroots environmental justice movement in South Africa driven mainly by EJNF and Earthlife Africa. The 1998 EJNF Poverty hearings were particularly important in this process as the impact of environmental degradation on poor communities was demonstrated. Also significant was the leadership of visionary individuals such as Chris Albertyn, Bobby Peek, Mandla Mentoer and Thabo Madihlapa. They frame(d) the issue of environmental justice in ways that resonate with people's needs and experience.

These three organizations are effectively promoting environmental justice in South Africa. However this focus on the three organizations as nodes or hubs should not imply a highly centralized picture. The nascent environmental justice movement in

South Africa is untidy with many loose ends and rough edges. As one key informant said, 'There are lots of pockets of good environmental stuff going on' (Interview, anonymous 2003).

Other significant environmental justice organizations

While it is argued that EJNF, Earthlife and Groundwork are the key nodes in the nascent environmental justice movement, other significant organizations are the Environmental Monitoring Group (EMG) and the Group for Environmental Monitoring (GEM). Founded in 1993 by environmental justice activists to support grassroots struggles, GEM led by David Fig did pioneering work with people displaced by the Lesotho Highlands Water Project and brought local communities and South African national Parks officials together in the 'People and Parks Project. The work of the Wilderness Leadership School has incorporated some key environmental justice activists and influenced their understandings. New coalitions are forming around issues such as genetic foods -the South African Freeze alliance on Genetic Engineering (SAFeAGE) and energy. The energy caucus formed in 2003 includes a wide range of organizations including Earthlife and EJNF, and is based on 29 defining principles some of which clearly articulate an environmental justice perspective such as 'no privatization of state assets in the energy sector' and 'a just transition to sustainable energy which includes increased employment.'

The South African Water Caucus (SAWC) is also an important node in the embryonic environmental justice movement. Established in 2002 it is a loose umbrella of some 50 organizations, including EJNF, that is very decentralized and where an environmental justice discourse predominates. It is an important forum for the exchange of information between civil society and the state in the form of monthly meetings with DWAF officials. This interaction with government officials strengthens grassroots participation in decision making and monitoring, and gives voice to affected people on the ground. One informant maintained that the water caucus ' helps me because through it, I can share experiences and information with other communities, build up knowledge of water policy and legislation, engage with the minister and the parliamentary portfolio committee, and develop an understanding of how we can present ourselves in the water sector' (Cited by Munnik, 2004: 29). Another community member said, 'you see that we have similar problems to other rural areas. When we understand that my problem is others' problem too, the question arises how can we link up to fight, if it is the system, to fight the system' (Cited by Munnik, 2004: 30).

The SAWC is a vehicle for creating solidarity among activists opposing the privatization of water the caucus complained to Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, Ronnie Kassrils about ANC hostility to activists from the Coalition against Water Privatization (a member of the caucus) in Orange Farm. 'They pointed out to the minister that if he is attacking some of our comrades he is attacking the whole water caucus and that it is one of our preconditions for interaction with him that he respects activists and activist space' (Cited by Munnik, 2004: 36). Overall the impact of the water caucus is to deepen democracy in the sense of illustrating how 'a large, diverse and active civil society can supplement elections, by developing additional mechanisms for popular participation in governance' (Munnik, 2004: 39).

The actions of both the water and energy caucuses demonstrate how the re-ordering of the political opportunity structure since 1994 in South Africa has created space for previously excluded groups to contribute to policy formulation, to make claims through the courts, and to mobilize. The post-apartheid constitution provides the framework for a rights-based approach to social mobilization. But the context is one of increasing deprivation and degradation. The contradiction between the discourse of rights and the experience of unmet needs is the main source of growth of the environmental justice movement. The emphasis on 'rights' in the post apartheid dispensation, linked to vast areas of unsatisfied social needs, provides the main impetus to the movement. The extent of unmet needs is increasing with the increase in the privatization of basic services and the use of cost-recovery mechanisms such as water and electricity cut offs and the installation of pre-paid meters (a form of self disconnection). These have hit what Desai (2003) terms 'the poor', the unemployed and the lower working class hard very hard.

Clearly the failure of the post apartheid state to achieve social justice is the main determinant of the growth of popular organizations (the 'new social movements') outside the established framework of political representation. This has evoked a hostile response from the post-apartheid state. A striking characteristic of the state response to various forms of recent social activism has been criminalisation in the form of arrests and the use of force expressed in teargas, rubber bullets, live ammunition and stun grenades, as well as mockery and abuse. The state has clearly embarked on a political propaganda campaign that portrays these new social movements and their activists as 'the ultra-left', as 'criminals' and 'anarchists'. The last year has seen arrests and imprisonment of hundreds of activists. This is the context in which mobilization around environmental issues is increasing and engaging a wide repertoire of strategies and tactics.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT

The environmental justice movement is a realm of dynamic and complex interactions, but it is possible to point to the following characteristics: It is stratified with a complex layering ranging from national networks, to NGOs and the community level the movement is increasing organizing around key nodes. Organizations like EJNF, Earthlife and Groundwork are providing a social infrastructure for environmental justice. It is characterized by what Escobar (2004) terms 'meshworks' meaning flexible, non-hierarchical, decentralized, horizontal networks and forms of organizing with no governing body, official ideology, blueprints or mandated leaders.

The environmental justice movement involves untidy struggles lacking a coherent, coordinating centre. It is a loose network; like the global justice movement it involves new forms of organizing, new alliances and presents a contrast to the traditional membership based bureaucratic and hierarchical means of organizing in civil society. Their power is not expressed in quantitative terms like numbers of members but in their potential capacity for mass mobilization. For this reason one informant argued that the new social movements require new kinds of analysis involving reading patterns of interaction and social mobilization rather than a reliance on numbers.

There is a pluralist conception of power. Networking is the dominant relational form and in a decentralized social network there is no centre of power. The decentralized

networks structure of the environmental justice movement enhances its democratic nature. There is no elected body that makes decisions on behalf of multitudes of others without consultation. It is a dense space of thick, interconnected networks that links organizations, individuals and resources around diverse strategies and tactics including policy advocacy, legal demands and claims, in addition to direct, popular mobilization. These strategies are often (but not invariably) interconnected. For example all of the new social movements are using the language of new rights to both mobilize and seek enforcement through the courts. Many initiatives are counter-hegemonic which implies an alternative world that challenges the legitimacy of the current social order.

It operates at multi-levels, local, national and global. As a movement it is embedded in multiple 'militant particularisms'; it uses grassroots needs as the point of mobilization; the focus is on daily realities, on survivalist issues of direct relevance. While the emphasis is on the local, grassroots groupings are finding new ways to combine local activism with horizontal, global networking.

Leadership

Leadership depends on a handful of charismatic leaders who are 'bridging individuals'. They operate in both local, national and global social spaces and bridge issues and organizations. Some key informants were highly critical of current leadership of the new social movements and specifically of Trevor Ngwane because of his hostility to the ANC. 'The new social movements are driven by activists who are confrontationist - they don't build organizations with membership structures. There's no accountability' (Interview, anonymous, 2003).

Other stressed the role of leadership in connecting immediate needs to a broader, alternative vision, as illustrated by Trevor Ngwane, talking about the links between daily local concerns and global capital: 'In Soweto its electricity. In another area, it is water. We've learned that you have to actually organize - to talk to people door to door; to connect with the masses. But you have to build a vision . . . electricity cuts are the result of privatization. Privatization is the result of GEAR. GEAR reflects the demands of global capita . . . We cannot win this immediate struggle unless we win that greater one. But still, connecting with what touches people on a daily basis, in a direct fashion, is the way to move history forward' (Ngwane, 2003: 56). This is a good example of passionate 'framing work', providing frames that justify and dignify collective action, shaping grievances into broader claims.

In similar vein the SMI advocates the unification of these 'militant particularisms'. However, inspired by Foucault, Greenstein is critical of the SMI and Ngwane's centralized approach because it implies that 'the incoherent and untidy diversity and multiplicity of social movements are overcome and superseded' (Greenstein, 2003: 36). In his view their radical potential lies precisely in this 'uncontrolled untidiness' (Greenstein, 2003: 36).

Social base

A key question concerns the social base of the environmental justice movement. Does it articulate the needs, demands and aspirations of subordinate groups? What are the social characteristics of the participants? It has been claimed that environmental issues can be a catalyst for very broad civil society mobilization, in that they have a 'supra-classist dimension' (Acselrad, 2002: 20). This 'rainbowism' was articulated by Nelson

Mandela in 1995 when he referred to how 'environmental concerns can unite South Africans going beyond economic and political barriers' (Cited by McDonald, 1998: 76). Despite the expectations around the Steel Valley Crisis Committee very few current struggles involve socially inclusive, multiracial coalitions. All environmental issues have a class pertinence and the differences between the social base of the old and new environmental struggles is significant. This is a new moment in the history of environmentalism in South Africa. The environmental concerns of the past - preservation and conservation - driven by a largely white, middle class constituency, are being supplanted by new struggles with a different social base.

All informants agreed that the mainstream environmental movement is socially shallow - rooted in the white, middle class. 'It doesn't reach deep into the ranks of the excluded and marginalised' (Interview, anonymous, 2003). All were agreed that 'the Poores' (the unemployed and lower working class) were the most relevant political force in the environmental justice movement. 'It is the poods who have opposed the water and electricity cut-offs and evictions' (Desai, 2003: 3). The movement is giving them voice in the sense that it provides a means of expressing their interests and values and a means of translating them into policy. Many of the activists in these grassroots environmental justice initiatives are young people and women. The female activist role often stems from traditional women's socialization to be the administrators of household consumption. In this capacity they are the shock absorbers of environmental degradation. It is women who struggle with the dust from a defunct gold mine in Kasgiso and so constitute the driving force in the Kagiso Environmental Awareness Forum which is campaigning for the rehabilitation of the tailings dam. It is women who have to walk further and struggle harder to obtain access to clean water so the largest social category attending mass meetings called by the Coalition against Water Privatization are older women, 'the grannies'.

The nature of social bonds

The nature of social bonds varies. Some of the organizations and the loose-knit networks which constitute the environmental justice movement involve high levels of social cohesion and solidarity. Several informants described Earthlife Africa as marked by durable relations of trust and co-operation. The social relations among members of the Coalition Against Water Privatization are marked by concern and practical action to support participants arrested in protest actions. Other examples of these social groupings acting as an informal resource pool include providing shelter for those evicted and help with disconnections of water and electricity. All of these organizations are an important source of resources. People with limited resources cannot sustain contentious collective action. Several informants stressed that the collapse of the Steel Valley Crisis Committee was partly due to a lack of organizational resources. But overall the nature of the social bonds established between participants in environmental justice struggles are very different. In the case of the Steel Valley Crisis Committee it will be shown below, that they were transient, perfunctory, friable and short lived; involving no long-term commitments and obligations. In the case of participants in actions like those around the WSSD they could best be described as what Bauman calls 'carnival bonds' rooted in intense, public displays (Bauman, 2002: 72). Generally, the environmental justice movement contains pockets of strong personal relations, collective identities, thick social networks marked by a social cohesiveness, what Tarrow (2003) terms 'embedded networks', rather than 'contingent alliances' which are short term and instrumental (Tarrow, 2003: 19). For

many activists social interactions have a depth and intensity that contrast with the thin, atomized identities of citizen and consumer. In this sense the movement is disseminating new images of solidarity and connectedness. These social interactions are crucial to movement formation. As Tarrow argues, it is when struggles 'can build on or construct dense social networks and connective structures, then . . . episodes of contention result in sustained interactions with opponents - specifically, in social movements' (Tarrow, 2003: 19). But the 'episodes of contention' also require new political opportunities.

A bridging of social and environmental issues

While there is no master frame of 'environmentalism', the movement is bridging ecological and social justice issues - in this sense there are strong connections being forged between the 'red', the 'green' and the 'brown'. As Harvey writes, 'the movement for environmental justice twins ecological with social justice goals in quite unique ways' (Harvey, 1997: 387). He stressed the links between the environmental justice movement and the broader movements that have been termed 'the environmentalism of the poor.' This merging of ecological and social justice issues means that the environmental justice movement is very inclusive; 'environmental concerns are not treated as separate and apart from health, employment, housing and education issues' (Camacho, 1998: 12). It incorporates many issues, and in this sense is 'virtually boundary less' as Foreman writes of the movement in the USA (Foreman, 1998: 12).

The movement has the potential to address root causes. According to an activist, 'environmental justice is able to bring together all of these different issues to create one movement that can really address what actually causes all of these phenomena to happen and gets to the root of the problems' (Cited by De Chiro, 1998: 124). For many 'the root of the problem' is the privatization and cost recovery policies that constitute the foundation of neo-liberalism. The Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC) is one of the most prominent organizations mobilizing around access to basic services and is an affiliate of both EJNF and the Anti-Privatization Forum (APF). The APF is a significant example of what Ruiters has argued for, 'a deeper approach to environmental justice' which involves 'a focus on the production . . . of injustices' (Ruiters, 2001: 112). As McDonald states, all the evidence is that 'privatization worsens access to core services for the urban poor and ultimately exacerbates environmental degradation' (McDonald, 2002: 296).

Strategies and tactics

All the decentralised networks which comprise the environmental justice movement engage in a variety of struggle activities. These include strikes, litigation and court applications, advocacy, negotiation, boycotts, organised marches, public petitions, use of media, internet connections, and demonstrations. Particularly significant here are the use of rights strategies are a way of countering hegemonic practices and strengthening marginalised communities.

Not all of these tactics are 'new' which points to the importance of not exaggerating the distinctiveness and 'newness' of movements like the Environmental Justice movement. Not only is there a degree of continuity in the repertoire of tactics and strategies but there is some transference of leadership from the old to the new struggles. Trevor Ngwane, for example was both a prominent anti-apartheid activist as

well as being central to the APF and the SECC. There has not been a total rupture with the past because of strong traditions of social movement unionism which linked struggles in the workplace to community issues.

Some of these forms of social activism among poor and vulnerable communities are new in the sense that they involve new targets (corporations and multinational institutions rather than states), a new global terrain, new connections between issues (such as militarisation and environmental damage) and new forms of horizontal organising which connect people and information through the internet. These new patterns of social mobilisation go beyond political parties, trade unions and NGOs; they represent a new type of populist politics, but the crucial question is whether these are largely ephemeral, incapable of establishing a sustained, durable presence? Or could they move beyond the confines of 'militant particularisms', and generate a broader, transformative politics which involves a deepening of democracy.

Tactics are often extremely innovative, such as the 'toxic tours' organised by the SDCEA in South Durban, and the Greenwash Academy Awards aka Green Oscars targeting infamous corporate environmental abusers organised by Groundwork at the WSSD in 2002. Direct action is sometimes dramatic. For example, in 2002 a total of 52 municipal workers union members were arrested after emptying buckets of shit outside the municipal offices. This echoes a protest which took place in 1993 when a group of women in Ivory Park furious at the suspension of sanitation services in the township, protested by marching to the administration offices with 140 buckets full of shit from overflowing toilets and hurled the contents of the buckets at local authority officials (Bhagawat, 1993). This protest illustrates what Arjun Appadurai (2002) has called 'the politics of shit', meaning struggles around the most basic of human needs. The phrase seems particularly significant at this moment when the Igoli 2002 privatisation plan has been renamed 'E. coli. 2002' for a good reason: excrement from the pit latrines of Johannesburg's slums regularly pollutes Sandton's borehole water supplies (Bond, 2002). Some of these recent protests have involved women's use of their sexuality. For example in 1996 a group of women from Orange Farm, protesting about water cut-offs marched to the municipal offices with a memorandum and some of the women undressed. In 1999 women from Orange Farm initiated the closing off of the Golden Highway by blocking the flow of traffic.

Another strategy is to provide expert engagement in policy processes. Examples are Groundwork's submissions on the Air Quality Bill, or Earthlife's Africa's comments on the Draft Radioactive Waste Bill. This policy engagement does not only involve expert reports in the conventional sense. It also involves the recognition of local, indigenous knowledge and experiential evidence. For example, in November 2002 Groundwork facilitated an active member of the Sasolburg Environmental Committee, to travel to Cape Town from Zamdela to address the Minerals and Energy Portfolio Committee in parliament.

All the networks which comprise the environmental justice movement use the internet to co-ordinate their activity and give visibility to their issues. They also produce publications such as EJNF's quarterly publication *The Networker*, the Earthlife newsletter and Groundwork's series of annual reports. These publications are an important vehicle by which the environmental justice movement is able to amplify grassroots voices, experiences, and participation in policy formulation.

This is also achieved through critical research, especially when it builds capacity in grassroots communities. The research on Orange Farm undertaken by the Coalition Against Water Privatisation involved training some 60 members of that community. Groundwork has emphasized the development of community air monitoring programmes in selected communities affected by industrial pollution. Research is often undertaken to provide the empirical evidence to engage in litigation as well as in policy formulation. It will be demonstrated below that in the case of the Steel Valley Crisis Committee the emphasis on litigation displaced collective mobilisation. This is in stark contrast to the other case study, the Coalition against Water Privatisation where litigation is only one tactic in a wide repertoire of struggle.

Mobilisation around rights

The main mobilisation strategy is to reframe needs as rights. 'We take what people experience as needs and re-formulate them as rights to mobilise around. You have to start with needs on the ground before you get to the intellectual level' (Interview, Madihlaba, 2003). All the activists interviewed emphasize grassroots mobilisation around immediate needs. Some stressed the role of intellectuals in reframing immediate needs as rights. 'People know their needs but not their rights' (Thabo Madhilapa interview 2003). This reframing clearly relates to the new political opportunities presented by the Bill of Rights in the post-apartheid constitution.

Much has been written about the relation between rights and political mobilization. Scheingold (1974) argued that because rights foster perceptions of entitlement they 'nurture political mobilization. . . by activating an acquiescent citizenry and organising groups into political units' (Scheingold, 1974: 131). In this sense rights are a source of leverage. The possibilities are demonstrated by the Coalition against Water Privatisation in what Greenstein (2003) has conceptualised as a 'legal-activist' route. It involves a combination of mass struggle and legal mechanisms; legal action claiming rights in terms of the freedom of information act and the constitution, with popular mobilisation and education around these rights.

Litigation to claim these rights is one of the main strategies used by various components of the movement. Many legal challenges have recently been brought by civil society against industries for environmental health damages. For example, damage claims have been made by asbestos workers, vanadium workers, ex-workers of Thor Chemicals and the Steel Valley community. However the case of Steel Valley demonstrates the limitations of litigation. As Ruiters writes, 'litigation occurs after the event, and the high costs of litigation and the expertise require to engage effectively in the legal system discourage environmental activism . . . Few communities in South Africa have the resources and technical expertise to prove their cases of environmental racism or to demonstrate that a specific polluting source is to blame . . . Furthermore the pursuit of justice through litigation and greater regulation does not address the problems of class injustices' (Ruiters, 2001: 102). Class injustices are central to the growing global mobilisation around environmental justice issues.

Connecting the local and the global

The networks which make up the environmental justice movement are all locally embedded but globally connected. For instance in its campaign against the siting of a hazardous waste incinerator in Sasolburg, the Sasolburg Environmental Committee got

support from the Global Anti-Incinerator Alliance which is based in the Phillipines. In its campaign against Mondi's plans to build a boiler in South Durban the SDCEA threatened to launch an international boycott of Mondi Paper products and claimed to have the support of 189 organizations in 55 different countries.

These new forms of global solidarity and cross-border alliances were a focal point of the WSSD. The WSSD galvanized local environmental interests and activism. Being the hosts of the Global NGO Forum, the South African environmental NGOs became reanimated in their efforts to promote various agendas that linked environmental issues to questions of health, development and social justice. In some ways this wave of globally stimulated activism helped to renew confidence in initiating local campaigns.

So, do these localized, but globally connected organizations present a new 'vision of how the global and the local can become reciprocal instruments in the deepening of democracy?' (Appadurai, 2002: 25). Appadurai argues that 'transnational advocacy networks' (TANs) provide 'new horizontal modes for articulating the deep democratic politics of the local' and 'create forms of knowledge transfer and social mobilization . . . on behalf of the poor that can be characterized as "grassroots globalization" or . . . 'globalization from below' (Appadurai, 2002: 272).

For this grassroots globalization the World Social Forum (WSF) is an important social space. According to one key informant what defines new social movements as different and distinctive from other political forms is that they are aware that they are part of a global justice movement. The WSF is widely understood to be at the core of this, and with about 100 000 people from 100 different countries attending the fourth WSF in 2004, it is clearly growing dramatically. Many environmental justice organizations have attended the last two meetings of the WSF. The national director of EJNF made three different inputs in the WSF4 meeting in Mumbai and a total of 16 South African participants in WSF 3 that were interviewed reported that it was inspirational, that they had made valuable contacts and deepened connections (Graham, 2004). However connections to global civil society are somewhat thin at the grassroots, as Ngwane recognizes, 'it's important for us to link up to the WSF because this is the movement of the millennium . . . but there are problems with following the global elite around - it's not something poor people can afford to do. What if they hold their next conference on the moon? Only millionaire activists will be able to go there' (Ngwane, 2003: 55).

Relation between unions and movements

Important strategic questions concern the relationship of the environmental justice and other new social movements to the mass based organizations of COSATU and the ANC. Do they link up with labour? Several informants expressed scepticism about existing trade unions and political parties, though all stressed that the relations between the labour and environmental justice movements should be strengthened as the corporate plunder of nonrenewable resources is growing. Environmental organizations could be invaluable allies to worker organizations in opposition to capitalism' (Barchiesi, 2001: 83). However while there may be shared goals, as in COSATU'S and SAMWU's opposition to the privatization of water, the strategies of the labour and environmental justice movements are very different.

According to the General Secretary of NUM, 'differences in strategy and tactics keep us apart. COSATU accepts that single issue and sector based formations are necessary

to mobilize our society. They took a resolution to work with progressive social movements but not when they are narrow (with a tunnel view) sectarian and divisive . . . As a trade union we focus on broad socio-economic issues, not just the workplace. We differ from the social movements in that we in COSATU prefer to engage rather than howl from the periphery . . . But we must share the trenches' (Gwede Mantashe, seminar 2003). At this particular occasion Ngwane agreed that, 'We need unity between trade unions and the new social movements to achieve working class power . . . Communities must unite with organized labour against the bosses. Cosatu should put its weight behind the struggle against pre-paid water meters. Members of SAMWU are laying the pipes for the pre-paid water system. We must unite around specific struggles (Trevor Ngwane, seminar, 2003).

As stated above, this specific struggle is driven by older women. These 'grannies are the most vulnerable, powerless social category. They are ill equipped to move beyond particularistic struggles and confront the systemic patterns and causes of environmental injustice. Harvey maintains that, 'At this juncture . . . all of those militant particularist movements around the world that loosely come together under the umbrella of environmental justice and the environmentalism of the poor are faced with a critical choice. They can either ignore the contradictions, remain with the confines of their own particularist militancies - fighting an incinerator here, a toxic waste dump there . . . or they can confront the fundamental underlying processes . . . that generate environmental and social injustices' (Harvey, 1997: 401). What such a confrontation involves may be illustrated by a case study which demonstrates the difficulties in challenging the powerful corporate interests which are promoting both environmental and social injustice.

CASE STUDY: WATER

The case study focuses on water as a natural resource that is a basic need, framed as a right by the post-apartheid constitution. Access to clean water is threatened by 2 processes: *pollution and privatization*. The case study focuses on *two organizational responses* to this threat: the Steel Valley Crisis Committee which is mobilizing around the pollution of the groundwater by ISCOR, and the Coalition against Water Privatization, which is mobilizing against the installation of pre-paid water meters which is having devastating health and social impacts on poor communities.

(i) Access to water: the Coalition against Water Privatization

This organization, of which EJNF is a member, illustrates what Greenstein (2003) terms the 'legal-activist' route to social mobilization. The Coalition uses a rights discourse to challenge the state's commitment to cost recovery in basic service delivery. The challenge involves both litigation and direct action, both being understood as means of grassroots mobilization. The main demand is for decommodification of water which makes this a Polanyian type struggle (those defined by need opposing commodification in the market) as opposed to Marxist type struggles against exploitation in production (Burawoy, 2003).

The Coalition was formed in 2003 with the aim of building a national coalition against the privatization of water around concrete struggles. Coalition members include Jubilee SA, the Piri Concerned Residents Committee, the Anti-Privatization Forum, the Landless People's movement, Freedom of Expression Institute, Khanya college, the

Municipal Services Project, Ceasefire campaign, , the Rockville Concerned Residents Committee, the Environmental Justice Networking Forum, Gender and Trade Network in Africa, indymedia, Public Citizen, and the Orange Farm Water Crisis Committee (OFWCC).

The latter was formed in 2002 in response to extensive electricity disconnections. ‘The community felt the need for an organization to address these issues. It started the struggle with electricity . . . Of course water is now the main problem of the community’ (Khensani Musisinyane interviewed by Yitbarek, 2004: 23). Its aim is raise awareness around the right to basic services. The organization has approximately 3,000 members. The OFWCC organizes mass meetings and uses gatherings at churches and taxi ranks to inform people about pre-paid meters. According to Khensani, ‘we have weekly meetings and discuss problems that we face as a community, and mobilize people and tell them about their rights and try to address the problems to the administrators’ (Yitbarek, 2004: 79). This approach exemplifies the argument that counter-hegemonic mobilization involves social activists starting where people are ‘at’. The coalition is committed to a rights discourse, rights being understood as carriers of counter-hegemonic ideas. It is claimed that framing an issue as a right (as the SECC did with electricity) could potentially empower a social group and legitimate their demands.

Critical research is a major strategy of resistance. Participatory research done by the Coalition in Orange Farm and Phiri has demonstrated how the installation of pre-paid water meters as part of the post apartheid state’s policy of cost-recovery has had devastating health and social impacts on poor communities. One 78 year old Phiri informant told Harvey ‘Cooking cleaning and especially washing clothing uses a lot of water. I’m tired of this government. The whites were better. They never cut our water even when we did not pay for it’ (Cited by Harvey, 2003: 5).

Other coalition strategies involve community education through workshops and the distribution of leaflets, painting slogans in public places, marches and mass meetings at which anyone can speak and everyone listens. Effort is invested in legal action. For example, on behalf of the Coalition the Freedom of Expression Institute instituted legal action to give a researcher access to documents, and preparation is underway to challenge the legality of pre-paid meters in the constitutional court. This strategy involves a contradictory mix of appeal to and defiance of the law. A distinction is implied between the constitution as a higher legal and moral authority and the legislation in terms of which a number of activists have been charged. The emphasis is on struggle, rooted in the understanding that constitutional litigation on its own cannot lead to real change.

Both sides in this struggle, the Coalition as well as Johannesburg Water (JW), are using the legal system. JW obtained a High Court interdict that the democratic right to express dissent and protest had to be suspended. Under the interdict, any person found within 50 meters of JW’s construction sites in Piri who expresses opposition to the laying of the pipes and meter installation will be deemed to be interfering with the work of the company. JW thus attempted to silence and criminalize the voices of those who are resisting. It also brought in the SAPS and the hated ‘red ants’ to guard workers installing the pre-paid meters in Phiri.

The Coalition is extending its international linkages, and an international solidarity campaign is growing as around the world water is being privatized. Once understood as a commonly held resource, to be managed by communities and states for the public good, it is now being redefined as a commodity to be managed by market forces. Solidarity is a strong theme in the Coalition not only at the international level. Expressions of solidarity have been extended to struggles in other areas, for example three buses and several taxis from Soweto went to Orange Farm to attend the funeral of a woman who was killed in struggles around access to water, as well as to other struggles, such as the Anti-War Coalition march in March 2003. The coalition is also characterized by expressions of support with comrades charged in court, for example providing legal aid and raising bail money for the 'water warriors'. In this respect it acts as an important source of resources which deepens strong social bonds. Sometimes this solidarity extends to assisting impoverished households with illegal connections.

Some violent confrontation has resulted. The post-apartheid state's response to coalition activities has largely been criminalisation with detention, arrests and charges of malicious damage to property and incitement to violence. For example a group of 52 people were arrested on 21 March 2004 in an attempt to march to Constitutional Hill to protest about the government's failure to deliver social and economic rights. A SMI statement claimed that 'Our right to assemble, picket, dissent and freedom of expression, as enshrined in the constitution, was once again brutally attacked by the police force.' In this context of increasing criminalisation of resistance one activist said, 'It is not easy to stand up for your rights today'. Ironically, the language of rights is also used by Johannesburg Water and linked to an appeal to modernity. It tries to sell the pre-payment system as modern, post-apartheid and enabling consumers to exercise choice.

The main participants in mass activities being older women, clearly relates to their role as administrators of household consumption. For some of them, the water issue is about survival. Several residents interviewed in Orange Farm maintained that 'we can cope with pre-paid electricity meters, because we can use other sources like coal stoves and primuses for cooking but we can't cope without water.' Another said, 'we don't want things for free, we are loyal to our government, but the problem is affordability'. For others the issue is embedded in the wider struggle against neo-liberalism.

The APF emphasizes that cost recovery is the foundational principle of neo-liberalism and maintained that 'the ongoing struggles in Phiri are but part of a much larger struggle that is taking place across South Africa against the neo-liberal policies of the ANC government - over land, education, healthcare, water, electricity and housing. The repression and arrogance being meted out by the ANC government and Johannesburg Water have not, and will not, halt the struggle for basic human dignity and rights of the poor in Phiri and indeed, in innumerable poor communities across the breadth of SA. The collective resistance of the poor is not ephemeral - it is both necessary and never-ending for as long as the barbarism of capitalism exists' (September 2003 APF statement). This has generated some political tensions with ANC loyalists. For example in February 2004 several activists of the Orange Farm Water Crisis Committee were stopped from distributing pamphlets protesting the privatization of basic services by a group of local ANC members. The activists were told they were 'in ANC territory', that the OFWCC an affiliate of the APF was 'the

enemy' and that the ANC 'does not want to see your red T-shirts here' (Cited in The Citizen 13. 2. 2004).

Resistance to the pre-paid meters is not framed as an environmental justice issue. It generally takes the form of a demand for 'decommodification' a demand for a flat rate applicable to all consumers, or no payment at all. For example 91% of the Orange Farm respondents stated that they believed that water should be free. Despite the reality that we are a water-scarce country, the notion of linking payment to consumption is not popular. This demand for decommodification can potentially broaden people's direct and immediate concerns with access to basic services, to a new understanding that rejects the post-apartheid state's policies of neo-liberalism. Some go further to claim that the demand for decommodification could generate a diverse but united socialist movement. For example, Bond and Guliwe maintain that 'Through growing direct links to similar grassroots campaigns in places as diverse as Accra, Cochabamba, Narmada Valley and Porto Alegre, the struggle to decommodify life has enormous potential to grow from autonomous sites of struggle like Soweto into a full-fledged socialist movement' (Bond and Guliwe, 2003: 23). In contrast to the Coalition's emphasis on needs and rights, the following case study demonstrates how a legal strategy may be disempowering.

(ii) The Steel Valley Crisis Committee.

The Steel Valley Crisis Committee (SVCC) emerged in 2002 from action to indict ISCOR for their pollution of the groundwater of the Vanderbylpark area which had resulted in loss of livelihoods, and serious health problems. It initially appeared to illustrate the capacity of environmental issues to overcome the racial and class divisions between victims such as the Matsepo and Cock families and unite their 'particularistic identities' in a common cause.

Strike Matsepo cashed his pension to buy a smallholding in the area and has lived there since 1993 but has now lost most of his livestock due to contaminated water. He says, 'It used to be a good place, but my 26 cows have died, 5 sheep and 6 goats, 3 tortoises, 1 pig, 3 dogs and 4 cats (Interview, Matsepo, 2003). Mr Matsepo himself is sick and his sister who lived with him has just died. He asserts, angrily, 'My sister would be alive now without ISCOR' (Interview, Matsepo, 2004) Strike Matsepo's sister had high levels of cadmium in her blood and scientific evidence has confirmed the presence of a number of other dangerous and carcinogenic substances in the groundwater.

The Cock family lived for 14 years on a smallholding on the edge of the unlined ISCOR canal carrying water to the dams. Mrs Cock states, 'We were a farming family and had goats, sheep, ducks, horses, geese, but they all died. Many animals were born malformed. We left when the whole family got sick, skin growths, emphysema and cancer. My one daughter has been diagnosed with three types of cancer. The doctors relate these cancers to the canal water. As a youngster she played in it and we drank it. The ISCOR water has made all my children and my grandchildren sick' (Interview, Cock, 2004).

The SVCC was formed to mobilize the community and coordinate efforts to engage ISCOR, the courts and the government to deal with the pollution crisis. Actions included a protest march to ISCOR in 2001, picketing action at the WSSD conference

and litigation. The latter involved two legal strategies which were started in 2001. Firstly 16 people - all owners or residents of small holdings in the area - (12 black) brought 21 interdicts against ISCOR to stop the pollution. The interdict proceedings are stagnant at the moment as the case was dismissed in 2003 but the advocate is planning to apply for leave to appeal in the Supreme Court in Bloemfontein. All but 3 of the original 16 now have withdrawn from the interdict proceedings and been paid for their properties by ISCOR. The other legal strategy is a damages action 'which we want to turn into a class action of some 450 people who have experienced health problems or loss of their livelihoods. We want to build up the numbers to some 3, 000 affected' (Interview, Victor 2003). ISCOR's response was to fight back in court and to buy litigant's properties in an effort to block the challenge to them. This strategy has contributed to the collapse of the SVCC which must be analyzed as an example of a failed struggle against environmental injustice.

The main reasons for this failure was the power of ISCOR and the SVCC's reliance on a legalism which displaced social mobilisation. The advocate involved is aware of this, 'The SVCC brought everyone together on Saturdays 50 - 80 people. But there were no workshops or community education. We the lawyers were too active in the process. We should have transferred skills. We should have got groundwork and Bobby Peek in to do community training. There was marvellous co-operation between black and white. But the process was directed by outsiders, not the community itself. Now people have been displaced. They say, 'ISCOR vat alles' (ISCOR takes everything) (Interview Victor, 2004). Overall the SVCC was a shallow intervention, which failed to penetrate deeply into the community. One could go further and claim that it was disempowering in that it furthered a deep dependence on experts from outside the community and reproduced relations of passivity. This dependence marked the operation and inception of the SVCC as it was formed on the advice of the lawyers to overcome a gag order which prevented any of the 16 applicants involved in the 2002 interdict against ISCOR from talking to the press.

Other reasons for the collapse of the SVCC were

- the complicated and protracted nature of the litigation process which was largely opaque to the community (the court record is 6, 000 pages long).
- a lack of social cohesion and consensus among the litigants; some wanted compensation so they could leave the area, others to end the pollution. There were no strong associational ties built on horizontal norms of trust, co-operation, mutual assistance and reciprocity, no sense of solidarity.
- the success of ISCOR's strategy of buying litigant's properties which divided the community. For example, 'My mother got compensation of R115, 000 for our smallholding. People had to sign a contract that they would withdraw from the interdict. People accepted compensation from ISCOR because they were told their properties would be confiscated to pay the legal bills. There's a lot of jealousy and mistrust among the community' (Interview, anonymous, 2004).
- the lack of resources, 'We don't even have the money to make a phone call to bring people together' (Interview, Mikwi Mokoena, 2004).
- the lack of capacity in a community weakened by many health and economic problems.
- the lack of cohesion in the legal team. According to the ex-chairperson of the SVCC, 'the struggle fell apart because of conflict among the lawyers' (Interview, Sampson Mokoena interview 2004).

- DWAF's weakness. 'ISCOR ignored requests from DWAF to stop the pollution. It continues to issue ISCOR with permits to pollute the environment' (Interview Victor 2003).
- tensions around political allegiances and a lack of response from political organizations though the Provincial Chairperson of the SACP claims that he 'has taken up the issue at the highest level in the SACP.' (Interview, Felix, 2004)
- according to several informants, there were 'power struggles', 'greed and blatant opportunism' within the community. One of the key activists in the SVCC was alleged to be 'paid by ISCOR to divide and disrupt the community' (Interview, anonymous, 2004).
- the lack of trade union involvement. 'The trade unions wouldn't participate in the SVCC protest against ISCOR because they are afraid of losing their jobs and also they didn't want to look anti-government' (Interview, Mokeona, 2004)
- the apathy of the state. The ISCOR Pollution Forum which pre-dated the SVCC included representatives from government and ISCOR as well as the community, but was dissolved without action. Several informants believe that the Department of Trade and Industry's interests in steel exports overshadowed any commitment to justice for the community.
- the lack of support from environmental organizations.

Clearly the collapse of the SVCC is part of the social disintegration of the entire Steel Valley community. This was previously 'a strong community' with social infrastructure in the form of shops, schools, churches and bus services, which have all now collapsed. Mr Matsepe was part of the 2002 protest, but, he says, 'there is nothing happening now. The people who organized the protests are no longer here. There is no money for travel in buses. We are waiting for the people to unite again. We are now ruined and hopeless' (Interview, Matsepe, 2004). Another informant said, 'People have lost heart. There was a split in the community. It wasn't racial, they stood together and provided a fine example of protest around the WSSD. But the splits are deep. . . The community is weak and fractured and now geographically dispersed. It's a very sad story' (Interview, anonymous 2004).

CONCLUSION

These two struggles illustrate a number of themes: both involve legal strategies but the differences between the two demonstrate thin and deep levels of mobilization. In the case of the SVCC the major flaw was a legalism that was disconnected from mass action. Secondly, the organizations demonstrate how environmental justice is embodied in many contemporary struggles, but they are not necessarily labelled as environmental justice struggles. Neither the pollution or privatization of water were framed as environmental justice issues. Both struggles were framed in terms of health and economic issues. The discourse is that of impacts on health or livelihoods due to the lack of access to clean water either because of pollution or because of privatization. Both struggles are rooted in the growing contradiction between the discourse of rights and unmet needs in post-apartheid South Africa.

Both struggles illustrate globalization from above and from below. Globalization from above is evident in the international linkages of the corporations involved. In June 2004 the Competition Tribunal approved the takeover of ISCOR by global steel giant

LNM which operates in 13 countries and expects revenues to be worth more than fifteen billion dollars this year. (Business Day 9. 6. 2004) The company installing the pre-paid water meters, Johannesburg Water, is linked to Suez, one of the 10 'global water lords' (Barlow and Clarke, 2002: 109 - 112). The corporate interests in both cases used the law to suppress resistance. For example there was court action and gagging orders against both the ISCOR litigants and the Phiri resisters. However while the Phiri protestors' actions were framed in heroic terms, as those of water warriors, the ISCOR litigants largely became depressed and demoralized. Globalization from below is evident in how these local struggles against powerful corporate interests attempt to link with international organizations.

Clearly the Coalition and the SVCC are part of significant new patterns of grassroots mobilization that are emerging in post-apartheid South Africa which involve a mix of 'red' (social justice), 'brown' and 'green' issues. The anger and energy of these struggles generally comes from the crises experienced by poor, vulnerable communities without access to jobs, housing, land, clean water and sanitation. In this context it is unclear whether the notion of environmental justice could provide a platform to address these issues; a master frame with a unifying potential, a source of shared claims, demands and goals.

Perspectives on the capacity of EJNF varied, but most informants agreed that it was potentially the 'carrier' of a strong environmental justice movement in South Africa. . This is increasingly connected to a global justice movement which, according to Naomi Klein, is marked by 'two activist solitudes'. 'On the one hand international activists fighting issues which are not connected to people's daily experience', and on the other hand, 'thousands of community-based organizations fighting daily struggles for survival' (Klein, 2002: 245). This conception parallels what Castells has described as two forces in the 'back alleys of society': 'alternative electronic networks' and 'grassrooted networks of communal resistance' (Castells, 1997: 362). This is where he has 'sensed the embryos of a new society' (Ibid). In South Africa these two different kinds of networks are merging and providing powerful models of resistance to corporate globalization. This could be part of the 'sea change from Marxian to Polanyian struggles' that Burawoy (2003) has pointed to; part of a Polanyian second movement in civil society, that has been claimed to be the 'only potential source for long term progressive change in the region' (Tsie, 2001: 144).

Such a movement is crucial. Corporations are driving the process of globalization which is widening inequalities throughout the world, and are doing so through the increasing commodification of natural resources. A focus on the role of corporations illustrates how environmental and social justice issues are indivisible. While the trajectory of the Steel Valley Crisis Committee exploded any romantic notion of a 'rainbow coalition', this paper has argued that EJNF and other organizations constitute key nodes in a nascent environmental justice movement that is growing in terms of geographic spread, analytical depth, political impact and social cohesiveness.

WORKS CITED

- Acsehrad, H. 2002 'Environmentalism and environmental conflicts in Brazil', Unpublished paper.
- Albertyn, C. 1995, 'Towards sustainable reconstruction'. *Environmental Justice Networker* no1.
- Appadurai, A. 2002 'Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination' pp 271 - 284 in Joan Vincent (ed) *The Anthropology of Politics. A reader in Ethnography, theory and critique*. Blackwell Publishers
- Barlow, M. and Clark, T. 2002, *Blue Gold. The fight to stop the corporate theft of the world's water*. New York: The Free Press.
- Barnett, C. 2003 'Media transformation and new practices of citizenship: the example of environmental activism in post-apartheid Durban', *Transformation* 51, pp 1 - 24
- Bauman, Z. 2001. *Community. Seeking safety in an insecure world* Cambridge: Polity
- Bhagawat, C. 'Dung-ho women pelt local officials, *The Star* 18. 3. 1993
- Beinart, W. And Coates, 1995 P. . *Environment and History. The Taming of Nature in the USA and South Africa*. London: Routledge
- Bond, P. 2002 *Unsustainable South Africa. Environment, Development and Social Justice*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press.
- Bond, P. and Guliwe, T, 'Contesting Sustainable Development. South African civil society critiques and advocacy'. Unpublished paper.
- Bond, P. 2004. *Talk Left, Walk Right. South Africa's Frustrated Global Reforms*. Scottsville: University of KwaZulu -Natal Press.
- Bullard, R. 2002. *Confronting Environmental Racism*. Boston: South End Press
- Burawoy, M. 2003, 'For a sociological Marxism: the complimentary convergence of Antonio Gramsci and Karl Polanyi, pp 1 - 69, *Politics and Society*. Vol 13, no 1.
- Butler, M. And Hallows, D, 1998. 'Poverty and Environment in South Africa', *Voices from the Ground: People, Poverty and Environment in South Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: EJNF
- Camacho, D. 1998 'The environmental justice movement', pp11 - 30 in Camacho, D. *Environmental Injustices, Political Struggles*. Durham: Duke University Press
- Castells, M. 1997 *The Power of Identity*. London: Blackwells
- Cock, J. 1991 'Going Green at the Grassroots', pp 1- 17 in Cock. J and Koch, E. (Eds) 1991. *Going Green. People, Politics and the Environment*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Desai, A. 2002. '*We are the Poors*': *community struggles in post-apartheid South Africa*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Di Chiro, G. 1998, 'Nature as Community: the convergence of environment and social justice', pp 120 - 143 in Goldman, M. *Privatizing Nature*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Escobar, a. 2004. 'Post capitalist cultures', pp 349 - 359 in Sen, J. Anand, A, Escobar A. and Waterman, P. (eds) *Challenging Empires*. New Delhi: The Viveka Foundation
- Foreman, C. 1998 *The Promise and Perils of Environmental Justice*. Washington: Brookings Institute Press.
- Freund, B. 1999 'Brown and Green in Durban: the evolution of environmental policy in a post-apartheid city'. Unpublished paper.
- Graham, L. 2004, 'The local and the global: the World Social Forum', Unpublished paper.

- Greenstein, R. 2003 'State, civil society and the reconfiguration of power in post-apartheid South Africa', CCS Research Report no 8.
- Harvey, D. 1997 *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*. London: Oxford: Blackwells
- Hunt, A. 1990 'Rights and social movements: counter-hegemonic strategies', *Journal of Law and Society*, vol 23.
- Kahn, F. 1990. 'Involvement of the masses in environmental politics', pp 36 - 38, *Veld and Flora*.
- Klein, N. 2002 'Reclaiming the Commons', pp 81 -89 *New Left Review* May.
- Manqele, M. 1997. 'Waste in South Africa pp 14 - 16 *The Networker*, no 14, Winter
- McDonald, D (ed) 2002. *Environmental Justice in South Africa*. Cape Town: UCT Press
- McDonald, D. 1998 'Three steps forward, two steps back: ideology and urban ecology in South Africa, pp 73 - 88, *Review of African Political Economy*, no 75, 1998
- Mittelman, J. 1998 'Globalisation and environmental resistance politics', *Third World Quarterly*
vol 19, no 5, 1998 pp 847 - 872
- Munnik, V. 2004 'The South African Water Caucus'. Unpublished paper
- Ngwane, T. 2003 'Revolt against the ANC' pp 37 - 58 *New Left Review* no 22.
- Oelshaeger, 1991, *The Idea of Wilderness*. New Haven: Yale University Press
- Phadu, T. 1997 'Chloorkop toxic waste dump', pp 14 - 17, *Environmental Justice Networker* no 12.
- Polanyi, K. 1957 *The Great Transformation*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Ruiters, G. 2001 'Environmental racism and justice in South African's transition' pp 95 - 103 in *Politikon* 28 (1)
- Ramphela M. (ed) (1991) *Restoring the Land*. London: Panos Institute
- Sachs, W. 1999, 'Sustainable Development and the Crisis of Nature' in Fisher F. and Hajer A. (eds) *Living with Nature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Scheingold, S. 1974 *The Politics of Rights: Lawyers, public policy and social change*, Yale University Press.
- Sklair, L. 'Global Sociology and Global Environmental Change', pp 205 - 227, in M. Redclift and Benton, T. (eds) *Social Theory and the Environment*. New York: Routledge
- Tarrow, S. 2003 'Global movements, complex internationalism and North-South inequality'. Paper delivered at the Workshop on Contentious Politics, Columbia University.
- Touraine, A. 2002 'The importance of social movements', pp89 - 95 *Social Movement Studies* no 1, vol 1.
- Tsie, B. 2001. 'International political Economy and Southern Africa', pp 110 - 147 in Vale, P. Swatuk, L, Oden, B. *Theory, Change and Southern Africa's Future*. London: Palgrave. .
- Vincent, A. 1992. *Modern Political Ideologies* . Oxford: Blackwell
- Yitbarek, Y. 2004 'Water Privatisation: a case study of Orange Farm'. MA Research Report, University of the Witwatersrand

INTERVIEWS

For reasons of confidentiality 5 informants are cited as anonymous.

Black, Vanessa. Director of The Greenhouse. 2003

Cock, Joey, member of the Steel Valley Crisis Committee. 2003

Felix, Marianne. Occupational health worker. 2003

Felix, Neville. Member of the Steel Valley Crisis Committee 2003

Fig, David. Environmental Activist. 2003

Hallowes, David. Environmental activist. 2003

Koch, Eddie. Environmental activist. 2003.

Lakhani, Muna. Earthlife Zero Waste Campaign co-ordinator 2003

Mabilitsa, Zac. EJNF office bearer. 2003

Madihlapa, Thabo. Director of the Environmental Justice Networking Forum. 2003.

Marnewick, Daniel. EWT. 2003

Matsepo, Strike. Steel Valley Crisis Committee. 2003

Mentoor, Mandla. Director of the Soweto Mountain of Hope. 2003

McDonald, David. Municipal Services Project Director. 2003

Munnik, Victor. Environmental activist. 2003

Mokoena, Samson. Chairperson of the Steel Valley Crisis Committee 2003

Mokoena, Mwiki. Steel Valley Crisis Committee 2003

Ntoapene, Caroline. Sasolburg Environmental Committee member. 2003

Peek, Bobby. Director of Groundwork. 2003

Phalane, Mashile. Earthlife Nuclear campaign co-ordinator. 2003

Sugre, Anne. Director of Eco-city. 2003

Victor, Margie. Advocate. 2003

Worthington, Richard. Earthlife Gauteng co-ordinator. 2003

Van Zyl, Andre. Endangered Wildlife Trust. 2004.