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4.2 Environmental movement in transformation

Large environmental organisations in Russia

In the 1990s, changes occurred among environmental NGOs in Russia that in many ways mirrored the transformations in environmental administration. Russia moved into a new era in environmental politics with transnational environmental organisations entering the Russian environmental debate. Such large foreign-based organisations as Greenpeace, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), and International Union of Conservation of Nature established offices in Russia. These organisations brought a new element to the environmental movement and especially the dialogue surrounding state environmental policy. Unlike national NGOs, the transnational organisations had consistent and large financial resources originating from grants, governments, and citizens of Western countries (cf. Yanitsky 2000). This enhanced operational opportunities because the transnational NGOs could extend their efforts to distant and isolated parts of Russia. In addition, the Socio-Ecological Union was founded in Moscow in the late 1980s and in the 1990s this organisation sought to coordinate the efforts of the environmental NGOs in the former countries of the Soviet Union. As was the case worldwide, one of the main targets in their campaigns was the forest industrial sector (cf. chapter 2.3).

In Russia environmental organisations are faced with and embedded in unique social and economic situations, as well as an exceptional natural environment. In addition to the business relations analysed above (chapter 3), transnational networks of environmental organisations have transformed the relational spatialities of the Russian forest peripheries. Recently, they have formed a spatial link between Russia and some Western European industrialised countries (chapter 2.2). All of the international environmental organisations analysed in this chapter are funded externally to specifically deal with current conditions. The Western funding brings along with it cultures, philosophies, attitudes, and values that have been nurtured in the experiences of the Western industrialised countries.

All of these organisations, both national and transnational, have forest programmes and work toward the creation of specially protected areas in Russia. This is a common priority, due to Russia's size, its unique forest ecosystems, and its large portion of intact land. Preserving the remaining pristine sites is a declared goal of both national and transnational NGOs and Russia is reported to contain about 25 percent of such areas in the world (WWF 2002). The goal of this sub-chapter is to assess the activities of these organisations: how they interact with governments, businesses, and citizens, and how they influence the set-

ting and implementation of public policy on forest use and preservation. We will, first, provide descriptions of the organisations and focus on their forest programmes; second, we will evaluate and compare them as actors in environmental politics in contemporary Russia.³

Nature conservation under the WWF began in 1961, and today Russia is one of the ninety countries in where it operates. The first WWF project in Russia took place in 1991, and this was followed by an official programme office in 1994. Over twenty million dollars have since been spent towards preserving Russia's natural environment, especially its forests. The WWF Forest programme employs a forestry approach that would ensure both human economy and biodiversity in the future. In the vision of WWF Russia, ten percent of Russia's most biologically diverse forests are to be designated protected and the utilisation of the remaining forests will become sustainable (WWF 2001: 2). In order to influence legislation to prevent the felling of virgin forests, WWF provides ecological education to regional governments. It also works with timber enterprises to ensure that their operations are in line with current environmental policy. WWF formed the Association of Environmentally Responsible Timber Producers of Russia, a group of timber companies dedicated to sustainable forestry. WWF promotes forestry under the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), an international group for the certification of forestry practices. Towards this same end, WWF establishes model forests in order to demonstrate sustainable forestry. In regard to the effective implementation of Russian environmental policy, WWF helps to fight illegal logging. It supports activities aimed at discovering violators and bringing them to court. In addition, WWF works with the U.S. Agency of International Development (USAID) to form fire-fighting crews. They patrol forests and educate the local citizens to ensure careful handling of fire. By 2000, WWF had seen its forestry programmes established in over twenty regions of Russia (WWF 2001: 4). In addition, in 1999-2000 WWF helped to introduce legislation to protect eight million hectares of Russian forests and timber resources (WWF 2001: 4).

Greenpeace came to Russia in 1992. It has since worked toward to implement new and stronger environmental legislation in addition to more effective implementation. Under Greenpeace's Forest Campaign, the main goals in Russia are forest preservation and sustainable timber utilisation. The basis of Greenpeace's work is that only independent and public control of forestry can significantly help the situation (Greenpeace 2000: 4). Accordingly, Greenpeace constantly publishes and freely circulates information among Russian citizens.

³ The research in this chapter is based on 32 in-depth, semi-structured interviews at the headquarters of environmental organisations in Moscow. 18 of them, concerning forest conservation issues, specially protected areas, and sustainable forestry, are used in this chapter. Three interviews took place in 2001, the remainder in 2002.

These pamphlets explain the ecological importance of virgin forests, and include an inventory of their current state in Russia. Greenpeace also supports the right of citizens to gain relevant scientific education and continuously updated and verifiable information (Greenpeace 2000: 3). In addition, Greenpeace reports to the public on any illegal actions uncovered in preserved forests by federal or regional governments or timber companies. It watches for over-cuts, clear-cuts and illegal cuts, and investigates *leskhoz*s and timber enterprises. According to Greenpeace, such a public and voluntary monitoring organisation would allow the Russian public to influence decision-making concerning forests as well as prevent violations of Russian law (Greenpeace 2000: 3).

Greenpeace has worked with producers and consumers of Russia's timber products. Like WWF, Greenpeace contributes to the FSC's independent certification of Russian forestry companies. In general, Greenpeace tries to ecologically educate and sensitise Russian citizens and timber companies as well as foreign consumers of Russian forest products. In this way, much of its efforts involve working with people rather than governments. Greenpeace cooperates with other NGOs in field research for such issues as forest fires and locating virgin tracts. This information is then used to educate the public and contribute to legislative initiatives for the designated preservation of these areas. A major part of Greenpeace's work in introducing legislation for preservation involves the Convention on World Heritage. This international policy tool is used to conserve important natural and cultural areas, and Greenpeace claims it is now the most effective way of preserving pristine nature (Greenpeace 2000: 13). To date, Greenpeace has funded and assisted the addition of seven of Russia's natural sites to the World Heritage List, submitted proposals for four more, and planned and organised several field trips to potential sites. Greenpeace follows this up by helping regional and federal governments plan and organise potential preserves and national parks.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) was founded in 1948 in Fontainebleau, France. In 1990, at the eighth General Assembly of the Council of the World Congress for the Conservation of Nature its name was officially changed to World Conservation Union - IUCN. It consists of 76 countries, 111 government organisations, 668 national non-governmental organisations and 63 international non-governmental organisations. They have 954 members from 141 countries. In addition, there are approximately 400 private individual members from 55 countries. The Moscow office oversees the entire former Soviet Union including the newly independent states. The government of the Russian Federation is a member and so was the State Committee for Nature Protection before it was closed by Putin's restructuring of environmental administration in 2000. Priority programmes include preserving biodiversity "hot spots", such as in the Russian Far East and Siberia, and sustainable forest use

and agriculture. Within the forest programme, IUCN tries to create citizen involvement in forest management and public policy while maintaining regional interests in the management of the Russian forests. They try to incorporate a holistic approach to combining forest use and nature conservation. IUCN Russia also works under the global IUCN programme on boreal forests. Throughout the world and in Russia, its major initiative is facilitating government participation in world negotiations.

The idea to create the Socio-Ecological Union came about in 1987, and the actual union was established in 1988 in Moscow. This initiative was made chiefly by people in the Nature Protection Corps, which was the largest informal ecological organisation in the Soviet Union, with a forty-year history. The goals and principles of the Nature Protection Corps were retained and expanded. The Socio-Ecological Union now functions as an association of organisations, each with its own priorities and budgets. They have a number of related initiatives such as Plant Your Own Forest, revitalising broad-leaf forests, and finding and spreading information about the experiences of ecologically sound forest users in Russia. The campaign also includes member organisations which work together to develop a civic movement with environmental goals and ideals. They publish and circulate information and help new organisations working in forest preservation to find financing.

The Biodiversity Conservation Centre was founded in 1992 by the Socio-Ecological Union. Since 1995, they have worked to influence politics in Russia, including legislation and its implementation. They work in conjunction with the natural resource sectors of the Russian economy. Since 1997, the Centre has developed strategies for managing specially protected areas. Their forest programme studies and protects ecosystems and biodiversity in the boreal zone, and develops mechanisms and normative documents for a transition to sustainable and rational forest use. They also try to circulate information by regularly publishing a forest bulletin. Another major goal is to increase public awareness and include the public and business people in nature protection and charitable activity. Since 1995, the Biodiversity Conservation Centre has organised the March for the Parks in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Central Asia.

Together, Greenpeace, the Biodiversity Conservation Centre and the Socio-Ecological Union have formed the Forest Club. The goals of this joint effort include the coordination of the organisations' forest campaigns, preservation of high conservation value forests, shifting the direction of the forest industry towards sustainable forest use, and influencing the preparation of the new federal forest code.

Comparing the ENGOs

There are differences in the ways these organisations try to affect forestry and the forest industry in Russia. Although having much in common, their tactics differ from one another as well as from their West-European counterparts.

A major tool for WWF in manipulating forestry in Russia is the promotion of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification system. FSC provides a system based on international standards, and WWF tries to affect the forest industry by appealing to the environmentally sound demands of their customers and consumers. This effort is most successful in Northwest Russia, where much of the forest industry is oriented toward exporting to Western European consumers. The demand for environmentally sound products there has increased in recent years and WWF attempts to convince the companies that if they wish to remain competitive or expand their markets, then certification is necessary. As our respondents told us, promoting FSC certification through Russian consumers would be ineffective because Russians are not ready to pay three to five percent more for paper and other goods made from certified wood (Interview 31). WWF advertises the FSC demands to both consumers and producers and distributes information at meetings to logging companies and paper plants. WWF also organised the Association of Ecologically Responsible Timber Producers of Russia, which consists of seventeen companies that are currently engaged in the certification process or already certified. This association is a member of the Global Forest and Trade Network (GFTN). Thus by promoting certification for Russian companies, WWF is attempting to bring them into a global trade network which takes environmental factors into consideration.

The effort to work with business is sub-political in that it does not involve Russian legislation or its implementation. The organisation comes to these companies as a sustainable market advisor, but with the extended goal of greening their operations. This approach has potential in that the concerns of both the organisations (ecological) and the companies (economic) are linked to the single process of certification. Many practical barriers exist, however, that limit its effectiveness. Based on our interviews and publications by WWF, it is evident that many forest companies in Russia are interested in certification; the process, however, takes time and requires various expenditures. The auditing process is thorough, including the inspection not only of forest operations but also working conditions and details such as conditions in the kindergartens of workers' children. There are intermediary companies accredited by FSC that help to carry out auditing and its service is expensive both in Russia and abroad. Additional costs accrue from necessary changes in technology and social conditions. Some small companies do not have the capacity for such changes and their costs. There are also no fixed standards or prices of different auditing companies for the certifi-

cation process and the ease with which a company can become certified depends on its entrepreneurial abilities. According to one respondent, some companies manage to get their forest certified for ten cents per hectare while others pay a dollar (Interview 31).

In the end, there is no guarantee for companies that their certified products will be in demand. Moreover, according to the WWF informants, small companies thought to be involved in illegal logging operations are interested in fast cash and therefore not in certification, as it is a long-term business venture. A WWF informant sees this lack of foresight as a widespread hindrance to ecological modernisation and these companies as harmful to forests in Russia (Interview 31).

FSC certification itself has been criticised as an imported tactic because it was used previously by WWF in Western Europe. There are environmentalists who feel that the process may not be suited to the specifics of the situation in Russia. For instance, Western Europe does not have any extensive tracts of virgin forest, whereas Russia has many. The standards of certification are based on research conducted outside Russia and, hence, do not take such distinctive Russian features into account (Karpachevskii 2001: 37-38). Many environmentalists also worry about the effective implementation of the FSC standards once certification is awarded to a company, for even though they may support the programme in general, they question the effectiveness of certification as a sustainable method of forestry in Russia (Berry 2001: 18-19). Another concern with the initiative is that it is not seen to work as effectively in Chinese markets (see chapter 5.2). Nevertheless, very active work on certification is now taking place in the Republic of Komi, the Arkhangel'sk and Nizhegorod Oblasts, as well as the Krasnoiarsk and Khabarovsk Krai (WWF 2000: 6).

WWF is a large foundation with substantial resources and, as many interviews show, they orient their efforts toward political success and showmanship. They target environmental issues such as tigers and leopards (the Altai-Saian eco-net success) and rarely partner with other international NGOs. With WWF's public relations and advertising campaign, they need to work on projects that will be under their logo and their leadership. Rather than going to Lake Baikal, which has a concentration of large NGOs, they go elsewhere and develop small, local networks. WWF does not actively seek to cooperate with other NGOs. However, when they inadvertently cross paths, such as with Greenpeace in Kamchatka World Heritage, they manage to cooperate. WWF also usually looks for areas where success is more assured. They do not work in regions such as the Republic of Karelia, where the forest industry has strong links with regional administration.

Unlike WWF, which promotes forest certification in various regions of Russia, smaller organisations of the Forest Club (Greenpeace, Biodiversity Conser-

vation Centre and Socio-Ecological Union) work mostly with or campaign against individual mills in their priority areas. This often involves developing and disseminating information that can be used by the forest industry. For example, Mr. Grigor'ev of the Socio-Ecological Union published a book on how forest enterprises can survive in a period of ecologisation of European markets (Grigor'ev 2001). In addition to guidelines on how to plan and update activities, the book analyses past experiences of the Russian forest sector and the problems that have resulted from illegal and environmentally dangerous operations. He relates this experience to other forest companies so that they will not repeat those mistakes. This is another mutually beneficial relationship between the non-profit sector and business. Specifically, the Socio-Ecological Union works closely with the mill at Svetogorsk (see chapter 6.1). According to the SEU interviewee, when International Paper bought the plant they greatly improved both its environmental record and working conditions. They consider the advice of the Socio-Ecological Union and translated Mr. Grigor'ev's book into English for their headquarters abroad (Interview 2). Even though they are not going through official certification, it is clear that the company is working on improving its operations.

In an contrasting case, Greenpeace fights proposals to build paper mills in natural areas. Their efforts helped hinder the construction of the Udovski paper mill, which was to be located near a specially protected area (Interview 32). They also work to reduce the harmful effects of a paper mill on Lake Baikal. The administration of this plant suggests different ways to green its operations while Greenpeace assesses each proposal and informs the Russian government about how each change will actually impact the environment. They have opposed every proposal as not green enough and advised the government to do the same. In this case, the NGO is acting as an independent consulting firm for the government. Greenpeace refuses to compromise with the company, and thus the plant continues to pollute and ecological modernisation is not taking place. The improvements fail even though money is available for change, the environmental movement is strong and pressure from international NGOs exists.

Greenpeace works somewhat differently in the environmental arena in Russia. The basic strategy of international Greenpeace campaigns is to shock the public into ecological sensibility. They go to troubled areas and to corrupt officials and cause a splash in the media. However, Russia's current state of affairs has called for a slightly different approach. Although banners have been posted on the federal Duma (Parliament) building and shock-videos depicting blatant violations have been released, Greenpeace Russia works more with research and information than sensation. And unlike WWF, which likes to monopolise programmes, Greenpeace is a member of the Forest Club. Other members such as

the Socio-Ecological Union and the Biodiversity Conservation Centre are working closely with each other, but do not sharing funding.

Unlike Greenpeace, IUCN is willing to make an effort to green the polluting industries. In the Murmansk Region, they established a network involving businesses from Apatity, governments, the *Laplandskii zapovednik* (nature reserve) and NGOs. IUCN convinced the polluting companies to improve their operations, including small technological advances in filters and storages. They formed an official coordinating council that consists of the vice governor and four administrators from six districts of Murmansk. In addition, a cooperative effort was set up between the company Severo-Nickel and the *zapovednik* to promote eco-tourism as well as environmental education to visitors (interview 46). This project was short-lived, but contained many innovative ecological ideas. More radical environmental organisations, however, are not supporting such compromising initiatives and, consequently, are not part of the coordinating council (interview 47).

We can note that environmental organisations from abroad are experienced in creating environmental policy networks based on inter-sectoral partnerships. These policy networks are effective driving mechanisms for setting and implementing public policy. Although they operate and expand their networks in Russia, the presence of environmental organisations can not be seen as a sign of institutional modernisation. However, these networks create new spatial relations which extend the effects of the institutional environment originating in Western industrialised countries to Russia (see chapter 2.). The organisations take the risk of working with poorly regulated and highly polluting Russian industries in a situation where laws have not been perfected and hardly even enforced. Each organisation has its own priority project – WWF works on forest certification, Greenpeace on World Natural Heritage, the Socio-Ecological Union on information gathering and dissemination, IUCN on small sustainable businesses, and BCC on broad management programmes for specially protected areas. Each organisation has its own niche in the complicated interaction between Russian forests and the associated policy. There is some overlapping, a little competition for funding, but the organisations cooperate at critical moments.