



# GreeningBrazil

*Environmental Activism  
in State and Society*

*Kathryn Hochstetler & Margaret E. Keck*



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*Environmental*

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*in State*

*and*

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We dedicate this book to the next generation—

Melissa and Laura—

and the next wave of  
Brazilian environmentalism



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## Preface

This book has been a long time in the making. Our object of study—origins, strategies, and the political “fit” of environmentalism and environmentalists in Brazil—was more elusive than either of us expected. Neither a single social movement, nor a policy area, nor even a clearly bounded corpus of ideas, environmentalism in a large developing country was a moving target, as it had to be to make sense in its home territory; nonetheless, by refusing to fit the theoretical pigeonholes into which we wanted to place it, it made our task harder. This research started out in 1989 as two separate projects, both of which long ago produced book manuscripts with which neither of us was fully satisfied. We became involved in other projects. The idea for this book resulted from a serendipitous meeting in June 2000 at the airport in São Paulo, where it occurred to us to put our books together. Several years and many conversations later, there is almost nothing left from the original manuscripts, but we hope the combined result is closer to what each of us wishes she had written in the first place.

Obviously this book does not reflect a classic research design with a well-formulated initial hypothesis, investigated in the field and analyzed and reported promptly. Instead it is the synthetic product of a whole series of research efforts, carried out independently by different scholars with somewhat different preoccupations over a number of years. In rethinking, re-situating, and rewriting the manuscript, we tried to give it conceptual and narrative unity, but there will inevitably be signs of its several origins. Each of us has built continuously on the fieldwork that she began fifteen years ago, but we now see that fieldwork in the light of continuing research on environmental politics and research in Brazil. We have seen the birth and death of organizations and institutions, witnessed life-cycle and other changes in the Brazilian activists we have known over the years, and been present

during key events and processes of the political and economic changes that Brazil has undergone since the military left power in the mid-1980s. In the meantime, we have both developed close friendships and rich collegial relations with Brazilians, and have learned enough to doubt certainties.

From this long-gestated research, we drew three major lessons that shape this book. First, we needed to pay more attention to relations between domestic and international actors, conscious that most international portrayals miss most of the story, and often get the dynamics wrong on the parts they do capture. That each of us collaborated on books about transnational relations in the meantime is obviously relevant as well. Second, a longer timeline highlights just how thoroughly embedded environmental politics is in a larger set of political, social, and economic relations, domestically as well as internationally. Without a broader understanding of Brazilian politics more generally—the impact of democratization, federalism, and the high levels of informality that challenge the implementation and institutionalization of policies—it is impossible to understand environmental politics. Finally, our early images of environmental activists in civil society pressuring state institutions for changes in policies and behavior have given way to a recognition that activists labor mightily inside the state as well as outside it, and that an accurate portrayal requires keeping both sites of struggles in view. The Introduction relates these lessons to some of the existing debates on international and comparative environmental politics, and on the relationships between the two.

This is a largely descriptive work—informed by and in constant dialogue with theory, but not intended as a test of any one in particular, in the tradition of grounded theory. The book's theoretical ambitions are modest, aiming to (1) produce a more nuanced view of the kinds of interactions that shape a multilevel governance of the environment in Brazil; (2) demonstrate the importance of studying particular policy areas like the environment within a broader political context that recognizes interactions between different levels of political institutions and among state and society actors, each of which has multiple commitments and connections; and (3) identify some of the patterns by which committed actors inside and outside the state attempt to make, maintain, or block policies against powerful but dispersed opponents, through blocking or enabling networks.

In the Introduction we promise to tell the “inside” story of Brazilian envi-

ronmental politics that the transnationalized version of the story leaves out. This is an audacious claim for a pair of foreigners, especially in a context where both the quality and quantity of national scholarship on environmental politics are high. The environmental sections of the National Association of Graduate Study and Research in the Social Sciences (ANPOCS), the contributors to journals like *Ambiente e Sociedade* (Environment and Society), the social science participants in the Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Science (SBPC), and others have already provided important insights into Brazilian environmental politics, and we cite their work repeatedly in this book.

At the same time, we believe there are additional insights that we can bring as scholars who do not live in Brazil but return there repeatedly—in Margaret Keck’s case for the last twenty-five years and in Kathryn Hochstetler’s for fifteen. Leaving Brazil to experience environmental debates as citizens in the United States, do research in other South American countries, and observe transnational interactions gives us a comparative vantage point that clarifies Brazil’s unique qualities and commonalities with other cases. Absences also make some of the transition points more noticeable: when we were here a year ago, that organization still existed, this option still seemed possible while now it does not, these allies were enemies (or vice versa), and so on. Overall this is not a better vantage point, but it is a different one.

Returning regularly to Brazil also gives us a vantage point not shared by those whose view of Brazilian environmental politics comes from international settings and the international media. For reasons that we discuss directly in the Introduction and indirectly throughout the book, the positions taken by Brazilians in international settings are often themselves not fully reflective of domestic environmental developments. The *longue durée*, the regular monthly meetings, and much more are simply not visible even to many Brazilians. They are critical for the unfolding of Brazilian environmental politics, but will rarely make headlines.

We have studied the headlines and the monthly meetings, using a range of methods that combined hundreds of semi-structured and open-ended interviews, extensive participant observation, documentary and archival research, and analysis of some quantitative data. They have also involved revisits to many of our research sites, some repeatedly. Just for accompanying the Brazilian preparations for the Earth Summit, for example, Hochstetler

attended three national meetings of the Brazilian NGO Forum (including one of the first where foreign NGOs were present in a related meeting), three state-level preparatory meetings, and at least a dozen additional meetings of São Paulo's statewide association of environmental groups, APEDEMA. She also accompanied the month-long government negotiations in New York of the Fourth Preparatory Conference, a South American gathering sponsored by Friends of the Earth, and the national preparatory process in Venezuela (providing them with documents and information from Brazil, not otherwise available). Keck attended two of the Brazilian national meetings, and we in fact met for the first time at the third meeting of the Brazilian NGO Forum in October 1990. Along the way, we have traveled to sixteen (Hochstetler) and nineteen (Keck) of Brazil's twenty-seven subnational units. The long time horizon and broad geographic grounding has advantages and disadvantages. Along with the advantage of deeper and more nuanced appreciation of the processes at work goes the frustration when, at the end of the period, we know so many questions we should have asked at the beginning. Our research trajectories have been similar.

In 1990 Margaret Keck set out to investigate the developing linkages between environmentalists and social movements struggling for material improvements in their living conditions. She resisted the categories of "new" and "old" social movements prevalent in the North, finding instead different combinations of demands for a better life and for a different life in a wide range of movements. Fascinated by the hybrid discourse of "social environmentalism" emerging from groups like the Acre rubber tappers, she set out to look for its urban equivalent. But although many urban environmentalists used the term "social environmentalism," their practice—and their histories—told different stories. Her detailed study of environmental struggles over São Paulo's water quality, involving developments around the Billings and Guarapiranga dams, led her to focus on networks of activists in state and society as they enabled or obstructed particular state policies (Keck 2001). Her study of the transnational relations surrounding efforts to enforce the environmental provisions of the World Bank's Planaflores loan in Rondônia (Keck 1998) stimulated her collaboration with Kathryn Sikkink on transnational advocacy networks (Keck and Sikkink 1998a).

Kathryn Hochstetler also began with a focus on environmental movements, comparing the ways that such movements in Brazil and Venezuela

balanced strategic and identity-based considerations as they sought to bring environmental concerns into political systems preoccupied with both development and democratization. Her later work continued to place Brazilian environmental actors—in state and society—in a comparative and international context, looking at a series of mobilizations around the La Plata River basin and the Mercosul (Mercosur) free trade area as well as in United Nations conferences. This international and comparative work oriented her toward seeing Brazil as an environmental innovator in its regional context, even as its ongoing environmental gaps and failures were also evident. Both sides, to her, justify a closer, deeper look at this environmental puzzle. This book is that.

A project like this one inevitably garners more debts than can be listed, much less repaid. Our largest debt is to the many Brazilians who have given generously of their time and papers to explain Brazilian environmental politics to us, in formal interviews and by simply letting us observe their activities. Above all, we appreciate how interesting and articulate they have been, and how hard they have worked to find creative solutions to often daunting problems.

We also owe more specific thanks. Maria Helena Antuniassi at CERU of the University of São Paulo shared with Kathryn Hochstetler an important set of early documents and interviews from the environmental movement. Hochstetler held research affiliations at CEBRAP in São Paulo, IUPERJ in Rio de Janeiro, and the University of Brasília during different parts of this research. An important portion of her writing time was hosted by the Centre for Brazilian Studies of Oxford University, which sponsored a conference, “Forests, Cities, Climate Change and Poverty: New Perspectives on Environmental Politics in Brazil,” that allowed us to get helpful comments on an early set of chapter drafts. Hochstetler’s research was funded by grants from the Institute for the Study of World Politics, the Midwest Universities Consortium for International Affairs, a Fulbright faculty research grant, and the Career Enhancement and College of Liberal Arts Professional Development funds of Colorado State University. While Hochstetler is grateful for all of this support, she would especially like to thank her colleagues and students at Colorado State University, who were interested supporters of this project for its entire duration.

Margaret Keck thanks the Yale Center for International and Area Studies for support in the very early stages of this project, as well as the Yale and Johns Hopkins students who have participated in her seminar on environment and development over the last fifteen years, the Yale Agrarian Studies Seminar, and her colleagues in the Yale and Johns Hopkins political science departments. During portions of the research she was affiliated with CEDEC in São Paulo and was generously welcomed by IPHAE in Porto Velho. She was lucky to have as research assistants at different moments Biorn Maybury-Lewis, Denise Campelo, and Cristina Saliba. Beyond assistance with the research itself, Cristina Saliba provided a home away from home, steadfast friendship, and boundless generosity during much of the time this research was being done. Keck's research was funded by grants from the Howard Heinz Endowment / Center for Latin American Studies, University of Pittsburgh; the Joint Committee on Latin American Studies and the Advanced Fellowship in Foreign Policy Studies of the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies, with funds provided by the Ford Foundation; the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; and research funds provided by Johns Hopkins University.

Innumerable people have commented on our research projects or discussed ideas with us in ways that have been partially incorporated into this book. We resolve the impossibility of naming all of them by naming none, but appreciating each one more than we can say. In addition, we thank the following people for helpful comments on the chapters and arguments of the book itself (Brazilian style, they are alphabetized by first name): Alberto Lourenço, Andy Hurrell, Charles Wood, Jonathan Fox, José Augusto Pádua, Lesley McAllister, Lupe Rodrigues, Mary Allegretti, Rebecca Abers, Sylvia Tesh, Timmons Roberts, and several anonymous reviewers. We are, of course, responsible for all remaining errors of fact and interpretation. At Duke, Valerie Millholland has been a prompt and encouraging editor.

In a project of this length, it is remarkable that our partners—Roger Hoover and Larry Wright—have been present and supportive through the entire process. Melissa Wright, born not long after the research began, and Laura Wright, born two years later, tolerated Keck's absences and grew up along with the book. We thank all for their patience. Now, other things can get done.

## Acronyms and Organizations

- ABEMA Associação Brasileira de Entidades de Meio Ambiente [Brazilian Association of Environmental Agencies]
- ABES Associação Brasileira de Engenharia Sanitária [Brazilian Association of Sanitary Engineers]
- ABONG Associação Brasileira de ONGs [Brazilian Association of NGOs]
- ABRAE Associação Brasileira dos Expostos ao Amianto [Brazilian Association of Those Exposed to Asbestos]
- AEA Associação dos Engenheiros Agrônomos [Association of Agronomists]
- AEBA Association of Ex-Scholarship Holders in Germany
- ACPO Associação de Combate aos POPs [Association against Persistent Organic Pollutants]
- AGAPAN Associação Gaúcha de Proteção ao Ambiente Natural [Gaucha Association for Protection of the Natural Environment]
- APEDEMA Assembléia Permanente de Entidades em Defesa do Meio Ambiente [Permanent Assembly of Environmental Defense Organizations]
- APPN Associação Paulista de Proteção da Natureza [São Paulo Association for Nature Protection]
- ARENA Aliança Nacional Renovadora [National Renewal Alliance (Party)]
- BNDES Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento [National Economic Development Bank]
- Brazilian NGO Forum Fórum de ONGs Brasileiras Preparatório para a Conferência da Sociedade Civil sobre Meio Ambiente e Desenvolvimento [Brazilian NGO Forum in Preparation for the Civil Society Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)]
- CDPC Comissão de Defesa do Patrimônio da Comunidade [Commission to Defend the Community Heritage]
- CEDI Centro Ecumênico de Documentação e Informação
- CETESB Companhia de Tecnologia de Saneamento Ambiental [Environmental Sanitation Technology Company (São Paulo)]



CGT Central Geral dos Trabalhadores [General Workers' Confederation]

CIEC Coordenação Interestadual de Ecologistas para a Constituinte [Interstate Ecological Coordination for the Constituent Assembly]

CNDDA Campanha Nacional para a Defesa e pelo Desenvolvimento da Amazônia [National Campaign for the Defense and Development of the Amazon]

CNI Confederação Nacional da Indústria

CNS Conselho Nacional dos Seringueiros [National Rubber Tappers Council]

CONAMA Conselho Nacional do Meio Ambiente [National Environmental Council]

CONSEMA Conselho Estadual do Meio Ambiente [State Environment Council (São Paulo)]

CUT Central Única dos Trabalhadores [Unified Workers' Confederation]

CVRD Companhia Vale do Rio Doce [Vale do Rio Doce Company]

Eco '92 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

ENEAA Encontro Nacional de Entidades Autônomas Ambientais [National Encounter of Autonomous Environmental Organizations]

FASE Federação de Órgãos para a Assistência Social e Educacional [Federation of Organs for Social and Educational Assistance]

FBCN Fundação Brasileira de Conservação de Natureza [Brazilian Foundation for the Conservation of Nature]

FBOMS Fórum Brasileiro de ONGs e Movimentos Sociais para o Meio Ambiente e o Desenvolvimento [Forum of Brazilian NGOs and Social Movements for Environment and Development]

FEEMA Fundação Estadual de Engenharia do Meio Ambiente [State Foundation for Environmental Engineering (Rio de Janeiro)]

FINEP Financiadora de Estudos e Projetos [Funding Agency for Studies and Projects]

FORUM Fórum de ONGs Brasileiras Preparatório para a Conferência da Sociedade Civil sobre Meio Ambiente e Desenvolvimento [Brazilian NGO Forum in Preparation for the Civil Society Conference on Environment and Development]

FVA Fundação Vitória Amazônica

GM genetically modified

G-7 Group of Seven (wealthiest countries)

IBAMA Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis [Brazilian Institute of the Environment and Natural Resources]

IBASE Instituto Brasileiro de Análises Sociais e Econômicas [Brazilian Institute of Social and Economic Analyses]

IBDF Instituto Brasileiro de Desenvolvimento Florestal [Brazilian Institute for Forestry Development]

IBGE Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [Brazilian Geographical and Statistical Institute]  
 IDB Interamerican Development Bank  
 IEA Instituto de Estudos Amazônicos  
 IFC International Facilitating Committee  
 INCRA Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária [Colonization and Land Reform Institute]  
 INPA Instituto de Pesquisas da Amazônia [Institute for Amazonian Research]  
 IPEN Instituto de Pesquisas Energéticas e Nucleares [Institute for Energy and Nuclear Research]  
 IUCN International Union for the Conservation of Nature  
 MAB Movimento dos Atingidos por Barragens [Movement of Those Affected by Dams]  
 MAPE Movimento Arte e Pensamento Ecológico [Art and Ecological Thought Movement]  
 MDB Movimento Democrático Brasileiro [party]  
 MMA Ministério do Meio Ambiente [Ministry of the Environment]  
 National Front Frente Nacional de Ação Ecologica na Constituinte [National Front for Environmental Action in the Constituent Assembly]  
 OAB Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil [Brazilian Bar Association]  
 OIKOS União dos Defensores da Terra [Union of Defenders of the Earth]  
 ONG organização não-governamental [nongovernmental organization (NGO)]  
 PCB Partido Comunista Brasileiro [party]  
 PDS Partido Democrático Social [Democratic Social Party]  
 PFL Partido Frente Liberal [Party of the Liberal Front]  
 PMDB Partido Movimento Democrático Brasileiro [Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement]  
 PNUD Programa das Nações Unidas para o Desenvolvimento [United Nations Development Program]  
 PPG-7 Pilot Program for Conservation of the Brazilian Rainforest (funded by G-7)  
 PrepCom (United Nations) Preparatory Conference  
 PROALCOOL Programa Nacional de Alcool  
 PROCONVE Programa de Controle de Poluição do Ar por Veículos Automotores [Program for Control of Air Pollution from Automobiles]  
 PSB Partido Socialista Brasileiro [party]  
 PSDB Partido Social Democrático Brasileiro [Party of Brazilian Social Democracy]  
 PT Partido dos Trabalhadores [Workers' Party]

PTB Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro [Brazilian Labor Party]  
 PV Partido Verde [Green Party]  
 RIMA Relatório de Impacto Ambiental [Environmental Impact Report]  
 SBF Sociedade Brasileira da Física [Brazilian Physics Society]  
 SBPC Sociedade Brasileiro para o Progresso da Ciência [Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Science]  
 SEMA Secretaria Especial do Meio Ambiente [Special Secretariat of the Environment]  
 SISNAMA Sistema Nacional do Meio Ambiente [National System for the Environment]  
 SIVAM Sistema de Vigilância da Amazônia [System for Surveillance of the Amazon]  
 SMA Secretaria de Estado do Meio Ambiente [State Environmental Secretariat (São Paulo)]  
 SOPREM Sociedade de Preservação dos Recursos Naturais e Culturais da Amazônia [Society for the Preservation of the Natural and Cultural Resources of the Amazon]  
 SOS Fundação sos Mata Atlântica [sos Atlantic Forest Foundation]  
 SPVEA Superintendência de Valorização Econômica da Amazônia [Agency for the Valorization of the Amazon]  
 SUDAM Superintendência do Desenvolvimento da Amazônia [Agency for Amazonian Development]  
 SUPREM Superintendência dos Recursos Naturais [Natural Resources Agency]  
 SUSAM Superintendência de Saneamento Ambiental [Environmental Sanitation Agency]  
 UNCED United Nations Conference on Environment and Development  
 UPAN União Protetora da Natureza [Union for Natural Environment Protection]  
 USP Universidade de São Paulo [University of São Paulo]  
 WWF World Wildlife Fund (also Worldwide Fund for Nature)

## Introduction

In February 2005 Dorothy Stang, an American nun who had worked for twenty years among impoverished farm workers in the interior of the Amazonian state of Pará, was murdered on her way to a meeting with local activists about land reform. Her death, and the reaction to it, instantly recalled the murder in December 1988 of the rubber-tapper leader Francisco (Chico) Mendes in the western Amazonian state of Acre. In the wake of both, international observers and domestic activists decried the lawlessness in the region, and the government promised active pursuit of those responsible. In Acre the assassins had been sent by big ranchers, in Pará apparently by big loggers. Either way, it seemed that despite a decade and a half of environmental and human rights activism, multilateral investment, and federal efforts to engage state officials, gunslingers continued to rule the roost.

Although there is plenty of violent death in urban Brazil as well, more subtle forms of death also stalk their victims there. More than seventeen million people live in metropolitan São Paulo, roughly equal to the entire population of the Brazilian Amazon. For them, everyday activities like going to work can be as deadly as a gunshot—decades after problems were supposedly resolved. Public pressure forced the Clorogil factory in Cubatão, São Paulo, to close in 1978 after workers died from probable workplace contamination. Later, Cubatão was branded the “Valley of Death,” with reverberations nationally and internationally. The state’s first democratically elected government in seventeen years ordered a cleanup that began in 1982 and was deemed successful. However, in 2001 former workers of Clorogil and its sister company, the French multinational Rhodia, were still seeking compensation for their lingering health problems. As one strategy, they became the nucleus of a new Environmental Justice Network.

Tempting as it might be to say that nothing had really changed in the

Amazon in the seventeen years since Chico Mendes's death, that would be a mistake. Both gains and losses have been registered. Environmentalists now influence Amazon policy through the federal environmental ministry and in some other areas of the federal government. They are also involved in projects supported by multilateral lending agencies and northern governments, especially the Pilot Program for the Amazon, funded by the Group of 7 (G-7) of the world's wealthiest countries. In Amazonian states where environmentalism had already gained a foothold among those struggling for their livelihood, Acre and to a lesser extent Amapá, environmentalists achieved influence in state governments. Although the environmental ministry boasted—and rightly—that from August 2004 to July 2005 the rate of Amazonian deforestation fell by 31 percent (MMA 5 December 2005), the total area deforested each year of 18,900 km<sup>2</sup> is still greater than the average for the 1990s of 17,000 km<sup>2</sup> (*Notícias Socioambientais*, 6 December 2005). Illegal timber harvesting and smuggling remain highly profitable; and powerful land grabbers, hit men, landowners, and lumber companies continue to engage in illegal practices with impunity. At the same time, even as new legal instruments for conservation units and other protective mechanisms have been invented, criminality has become ever more pervasive in the political as well as civil society in Amazônia, derailing sporadic efforts by the federal government to assert control over affairs in the region. Nonetheless, approximately 67,432,419 hectares of land are now in 277 federal conservation units, and 30,176,431 hectares in state conservation units.<sup>1</sup> The increase in land placed in conservation regimes has been dramatic in the Amazon region in recent years, from a total of 24,933,170 hectares in 1989 to over 60,711,694 in 2006. As we shall see later, however, designation as a conservation unit is only one small step on the way to effective conservation of an area.

In urban Brazil the environmental picture is equally mixed. São Paulo state is Brazil's environmental policy innovator, with substantial environmental capacity in its environmental agencies and the largest concentration of environmental activists. In the 1980s activists teamed up with scientists and the state environmental agency to tackle air pollution, and brought fixed-point industrial sources of pollution to near global standards. Extreme episodes of air pollution have virtually disappeared, though their impact lingers in the damaged health of people and surrounding ecosystems. But

now around 90 percent of air pollution comes from the 5.5 million cars that circulate in the megacity daily, a problem much harder to regulate than a few thousand smokestacks (CETESB 2000). In the 1990s São Paulo finally implemented a sanitation plan that succeeded in lowering the pollution load from domestic waste, having earlier instituted a program mandating treatment of industrial effluents. The Environmental Justice Network has built upon the accumulated know-how of activists in more densely organized parts of the country like São Paulo to keep companies from getting away with just moving polluting activities to less organized areas.

Many of the advances registered remain precarious, requiring constant monitoring and pressure from policy entrepreneurs and environmentalists inside and outside the state. This is because public policy decision making in Brazil is highly politicized (Rua 1997, 172), and there is rarely a last word. Enforcement tends to be weak, and expectations that policies will be enforced tend to be weak as well. As Levitsky and Murillo (2006) point out in their recent work on institutional weakness in Latin America, this weakness affects the way people behave in relation to political institutions and each other. These characteristics of the state strongly resemble those described by Douglas Chalmers in 1977 when referring to “the politicized state” in Latin America, a point to which we will return below.

These stories about the Amazon and São Paulo show the high stakes and daunting complexity of Brazilian environmental politics. Our first aim for this book is to describe this complexity as it has unfolded over time: Who has been able to shape Brazilian environmental politics, and by what means? How should we evaluate the resulting environmental politics and policy? We also look to explain some of the patterns we find. We begin by considering the relationship between international and domestic factors, arguing that domestic factors have been more important in shaping outcomes than often assumed. We also argue, though, that “domestic” and “international” are often intertwined in Brazilian environmental politics and that a framework focusing on the formation of networks in multi-level governance helps to make sense of the many interactions among levels of governance and kinds of actors.

## **International and Domestic Origins of Environmental Politics**

Ideas about environmental protection have existed on the periphery of social thought and political agendas for centuries. Sustained and institutionalized attention to the environment is a much more recent phenomenon, taking hold only in the second half of the twentieth century. The widespread adoption of environmental protection measures over a comparatively short period has prompted scholars to look for explanations at the international level. Many of these explanations fit into the broad family of theories of international norm diffusion (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). In these, the focus is on how norms are collectively generated or constructed in the international arena and then transmitted to domestic societies. Theories of norm construction and diffusion vary in their portrayals of how conflictual this process is.

At the less conflictual end of the spectrum, writers focus on the development of normative consensus that they assume can be assimilated straightforwardly in domestic settings. For environmental norms, one notable example of this kind of work is the statistical study of the emergence of domestic environmental protection carried out by Frank, Hironaka, and Schofer. As they state, “Our main arguments are thus that blueprints for the nation-state are drawn in world society, that such blueprints have, over time, increasingly specified environmental protection as a basic purpose of the nation-state, and that the provisions of such blueprints diffuse from world society to individual countries” (2000, 102). Their event history analysis does show strong statistical support for a relationship between emerging global environmental protection norms and domestic environmental protection practices around the world.

At this very aggregated and consensual level, however, the spread of environmental protection is measured in ways that flatten most of the real content of environmental politics in a country like Brazil. For those seeking parsimonious, macro-level theories, this flattening might even appear positive—Brazil would be one data point in support of their argument that national environmental organization accelerated after the 1972 Stockholm conference, as Brazilians created their first environmental secretariat in 1973.

But by failing to explore the actual mechanisms by which such processes take root, rather than simply occur, we would have no way of determining which processes were likely to prove robust and which ephemeral. The tiny national environmental agency established in 1973 (see chapter 1) was only important insofar as it initiated a very slow and gradual process of building on this first effort until twenty-five years later, Brazil had a national environmental agency with real capacity. It was not inevitable that this should happen. It is worth noting that like Brazil, neighboring Argentina created its first environmental agency in 1973, only to dismantle it several years later, and then finally start again in 1991 (Hochstetler 2003). Such experiences belie any simple and linear vision of how international norms are diffused, and we argue that the reason why norm diffusion is not such a straightforward process lies in domestic politics.

Other theorists do pay attention to the struggles involved in norm construction. Critical theorists generally see norm creation as a kind of power politics, in which ideas and meanings are themselves venues for political contention: “a critical perspective is one that questions our understandings of the world around us, particularly those we take for granted, in order to identify who is served by them and who is marginalized” (Stavis and Assetto 2001, 2). Some critical theorists question whether environmental norms are genuinely universal at all (Pasha and Blaney 1998, 436), while according to others the particular versions of environmental aims that gain hegemony reflect the interests of politically dominant actors, primarily in the global North (Middleton, O’Keefe, and Moyo 1993; Najam 2005). But because these theorists fix their attention on dominant actors and discourses, they sometimes miss the ways southern countries like Brazil have helped to set the terms of the debate, albeit not exactly as they would choose. Norms spread, but by virtue of their spreading they invite new actors into the debate over how the norms can be reshaped so as to become more inclusive and universal—a move that requires that they also become embedded domestically. More nuanced discussions of global struggles over norms help us to identify processes at work that stimulate and shape *national* debates over those norms, which in turn influence the country’s global role. As nation-state representatives struggle over emerging international norms with others (and with actors not defined by nation-states as well), their positions are



often shaped by audiences and adversaries at home, at least as much as those abroad, in a manner akin to, but broader than, Robert Putnam's two-level games model (Putnam 1988).

Our own past work has focused on several mechanisms of international influence on domestic environmental politics, both conflictual and not. By employing a boomerang strategy, transnational advocacy networks can sometimes bring together a variety of actors in issue campaigns to influence governments unwilling to respond to demands of their citizens (Keck and Sikkink 1998a, 12–13). These networks have expanded environmental protections, defended human rights, and achieved other collective ends around the world. International institutions like the United Nations have provided frameworks and focal points for discussing environmental issues in global conferences that generate numerous international plans and agreements (Clark, Friedman, and Hochstetler 1998; Friedman, Hochstetler, and Clark 2005). These conferences have been accompanied by abrupt increases in the number of domestic environmental protection measures taken (Frank, Hironaka, and Schofer 2000).

The best-known stories of Brazil in these contexts have stressed its resistance to environmental protection when pushed from abroad. In 1972 in Stockholm, the Brazilian delegation vigorously defended the right of developing countries to use their natural resources as they saw fit (Campbell 1973; Castro 1972; Guimarães 1991, 147–57). The occasion, the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, followed upon the end of the first UN Development Decade and the beginning of the second; Brazil's position reflected the assertion by developing countries of an international agenda of their own (Krasner 1985). A generation later, when Amazonian deforestation captured the world's attention and a variety of international actors mobilized to respond, many Brazilians—in the government and not—responded with nationalist resistance (Hurrell 1992; Keck and Sikkink 1998a; Kolk 1996). Even more recently Cristovam Buarque, a senator, former governor of the Federal District, former minister of education, and former Workers' Party (PT) intellectual, took on a young American questioner in New York, who asked him to respond as a humanist and not as a Brazilian about what he thought about internationalizing Amazônia. He responded that as a humanist he would be willing to defend the internationalization of the world—its petroleum reserves, its treatment of children, its financial wealth, its great

art museums, and other wonders. But “as long as the world treats me as a Brazilian, I will fight to make sure that Amazônia is ours. Ours alone” (*O Globo*, 10 October 2000). His statement, reproduced in countless e-mails and on at least 51,200 web sites as of this writing, had an extraordinary resonance in Brazil.<sup>2</sup> Stories like this one tend to create an image of Brazil as a late adopter of ideas about environmental responsibility, thus likely to be a receptor country in the process of transnational norm diffusion.

Yet even in 1972, when Brazilian diplomats were forceful exponents of pro-development arguments at Stockholm, environmentalism had already developed roots in Brazil. Environmental ideas have a very long trajectory in Brazilian cultural history (Pádua 2002). Scientists and nature lovers began to form conservation organizations in the 1950s, and in a survey in 2002, seventeen of the Brazilian associations registered as dedicated to the environment and animal protection had been created before 1970 (IBGE 2004, table 16). The “new environmentalism” arrived in Brazil during the 1970s as it did in the industrialized North. By then the states of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro had already established technical agencies for pollution control. A national environmental agency was created in 1973 and gradually expanded its personnel and range. In the decades since Stockholm, the desire to protect the environment has coexisted with the active pursuit of economic development, making Brazil one of the few developing countries where both ambitions have strong and articulate defenders.

Our book aims to tell the part of the story of Brazilian environmental politics that the transnationalized narrative omits. We combine process tracing with a focus on key events, moving between individual and institutional levels of analysis and paying attention to motivating ideas and their fit—or lack of fit—with other contending ideas in their time. Generally speaking, international and transnational actors influence Brazil’s environmental policy by engaging Brazilians who have the authority, charisma, or organization to bring about changes in policy and practice. Who are these Brazilians? What are the *projects* to which they are committed, the *trajectories* they have followed? What links them, if anything? Which domestic institutional and political conditions sustain or constrain them?

## International Influences

Political developments in the period that we discuss contributed to and were affected by regional and global trends. They signaled the end of a period when assertive military governments in the Latin American region adopted ambitious missions to purge their societies of subversive forces while setting their nations on the path to greater power in the world. At the same time, the successor governments were constrained by the changes in the global political economy that began in the 1970s, from the transformation of international finance following Nixon's decision to renounce the gold standard, to the oil shocks of 1973 and 1978, to the rush of international bank lending that ensued, and the debt crisis caused by overenthusiastic borrowing after that. The great confidence in developmentalism (Sikkink 1991) that Brazilians expressed at Stockholm had waned by 1982, when Brazil was forced to go to the International Monetary Fund for the first in a long series of stabilization loans. Over the next decades, Brazilian economic policy was gradually re-oriented away from development policies with a strong state role toward a more liberal market economy with much of the investment initiative in the private sector (Lopes 1996; Smith and Korzeniewicz 1997). Lowering tariff barriers lowered the price of imports, making it essential to increase exports to balance the books. In response, a massive expansion of export agriculture catapulted Brazil into the first tier of producers of soy, along with cotton, citrus, and other crops. The export crop frontier in turn pushed small producers off the land, leading them to seek new opportunities elsewhere and opening up hitherto unexploited parts of the savannah and rainforest.

International forces have influenced Brazilian environmental outcomes in contradictory ways. At the same time as foreign environmentalists and political leaders urged Brazilian authorities to protect rainforests and biodiversity in the Amazon, international financial institutions demanded a reduction in state responsibilities and personnel, and illegal drug and timber traffickers undercut state authority altogether. Thus international actors clearly matter in Brazilian environmental politics, but on all sides of the question. Their activities strengthen or weaken the resolve and resources of different sets of domestic actors, as they seek to advance or block proposals or generate new ones.

Particular physical attributes of environmental problems often make it

possible to address them at many different levels and in different venues, some of which are international. Activists must decide at which scale to act and in which venues, insofar as their networks and resources give them an opportunity to do so. Over the time period that we cover, there has been a marked expansion in the scale at which Brazilian environmentalists can act and the choices and resources available to them as a result. Some appear regularly abroad or at international events, part of a group that Tarrow has recently called “rooted cosmopolitans” (Tarrow 2005, 28–29) and Steinberg calls “bilateral activists” (Steinberg 2001). Some foreign activists have become what Chalmers called internationalized domestic actors (1993), moving into Brazilian domestic political space for extended periods; others remain distant but steady allies. Still others appear in the story once or twice, and go on to other things. The zone of relational cosmopolitanism is suffused with power, but also dynamic, in that it is a zone of constant frictions resolved in varying ways (Tsing 2005).

Nonetheless, it is important to remember that for most citizens of most countries, the word for international is “foreign.” “Foreign” intervention is always intrusive. How it is mediated makes a difference, and it can help when the mediators are domestic actors who are also participants in international society. We can identify five mechanisms of interaction between domestic and foreign actors that emerge in our story of Brazilian environmentalism: diffusion, persuasion, leverage, payoffs, and coercion. Cosmopolitans are crucial actors in these processes. They are the central agents in diffusion, the most likely to be aware of new ideas and models available elsewhere, and the most likely to try to import the ones that appear promising. Efforts at persuasion are more likely to be influential when mediated by people familiar with the variety of cultural languages in the conversation, facilitating the process of translation (Tsing 1997). Alliances with like-minded others abroad may help raise the salience of an issue, and in any case strengthen the will and capacity of the central domestic actors. Leverage requires knowing how vulnerable target actors are and what resources can be brought to bear to influence them—as well as the leveraging party’s degree of commitment. Payoffs in the form of material incentives—that is, offers of assistance that are hard to refuse (sometimes outright bribes)—and coercion are both mechanisms by which actors without the ability to persuade attempt to use money or force (either physical or not) as a substitute.

Whatever the pattern these relationships took in Brazil, they look different through the lens of domestic politics than they do from abroad. Some of the reasons for this are obvious but worth repeating, because when we move into the relatively abstract language of actors, encounters, and so forth, we forget how important the particularities of places and people may be, and the ways they affect international relations. Brazil is a very big country—similar in size to the continental United States. It is by far the largest and most powerful country in its region. Brazil is extremely diverse—ecologically, socially, racially, culturally. Like people in the United States, Brazilians tend to think of their country as *sui generis*, and are much more interested in domestic affairs than in events in other countries; Brazilian “exceptionalism” is as strong in its way as American exceptionalism is in the United States. The Latin American region still has a limited political reality for Brazilians, despite the existence of Mercosur, the free trade area that Brazil forms with its neighbors. Therefore norm diffusion requires a more active process of encounter, in which Brazil’s distinctive character is recognized at the same time as its participation is sought in constructions of international normative consensus.

### **The Origins of Environmental Debates in Brazil**

In the field of comparative environmental politics, concluding that environmental policy bears heavy traces of other features of domestic politics is common in both early classic works (Enloe 1975; Vogel 1986) and more recent ones (Adeel 2003; Schreurs 2002; Szarka 2002). Like the authors of these works, we argue that Brazilian environmentalism acquired distinctive features from its domestic context: the problems that it faced, the institutional setting, and the timing—that is, the other simultaneous events and social processes. Three features of Brazilian politics are especially important for understanding its distinct characteristics. These are the development of environmentalism in the context of a democratizing transition from military to civilian rule, the impact of federalism, and the continuous interplay of the formal and the informal. Its emergence during the transition period helped to shape an environmentalism that is more politicized and further to the left than one sees elsewhere, what Brazilians call socio-environmentalism. This political context contributed to unusually strong interpersonal relations

among environmentalists in state and civil society institutions, who work together in both blocking and enabling networks.

## Democratization

Over the last decades of academic writing about Latin America, political transition and then consolidation have been major orienting concepts, generating a voluminous literature about the causes, dynamics, and consequences of the change from military to civilian rule. While this literature is too large and diverse to be easily summarized, several general conclusions have emerged that we adopt as starting points. One is that the transition was a “disjunctive” and incomplete process (Agüero and Stark eds. 1997, i). Some changes, like restoring elections, could be effected quickly through legislation, while others, such as creating mechanisms of political accountability or a fair and open judiciary, required more protracted efforts that are still incomplete. A second observation is that the near simultaneous transition to more market-oriented economies added another set of cross-cutting challenges. Brazil’s economic transition was one of the latest in the region, coming in the 1990s after significant political changes had already occurred (Friedman and Hochstetler 2002). Neither the earlier developmentalist nor the later market policies challenged the profound economic inequities that are at global extremes in Brazil. While full discussion of these broader changes is beyond the scope of this book, their impact is evident in the specific stories of Brazilian environmental struggles.

Democratic political theorists have considered the relationship between democracy, democratization, and the environment. Their most common assertion is that democracy and related concepts like participation and decentralization are associated in positive ways with environmental protection (Doherty and De Geus eds. 1996; Press 1994). A large quantitative study failed to find a statistical relationship (Midlarsky 1998), however, and as Desai points out, the firmest conclusion may be that authoritarian regimes are usually unfriendly to the environment (Desai 1998, 10). Brazil’s military regime did begin formal environmental protections, but in chapters 1–3 we show how the gradual transition changed the strategies of both state and societal actors.

Brazil’s military regime, which took power in 1964, lasted longer than any

of the other contemporaneous authoritarian regimes in South America. The slow transition from military to civilian government, lasting from 1974 to 1989, shaped the political opportunity structure of Brazilian environmental politics, implanting changes outside the environmental domain that became quite important within it. Sometimes these were events, like the amnesty in 1979 that prompted the return of activists with new ideas and strategies based on their experiences in exile—such as creating a Green Party. Sometimes they were legal changes leading to new tools that could be used by environmentalists and their opponents, such as the law to protect diffuse interests in 1985 or the participation-oriented constitution of 1988. As Brazil turned to more open electoral politics, both state and societal actors had to reconsider their political strategies and interests. Democratization clearly transformed Brazilian environmental politics, although not in a unidirectional or unilinear way.

State efforts to combat pollution expanded in the mid-1970s, as did environmental organizations. By the beginning of the next decade, the military's limited liberalization began to turn toward a full-scale democratic transition (Alves 1985; Stepan, ed. 1989). Meanwhile, myriad social movements mobilized to demand decent social conditions and a share of the material progress that recent high growth rates had produced, but whose benefits had gone disproportionately to the wealthy. The dramatic contrast between extremes of wealth and poverty was something that environmentalists could not ignore. Finally, democratization produced pressure for a wider distribution of power and decision making, both within state institutions and between these as a whole and societal organizations. Eventually framed as demands for a "new citizenship," these were political claims in whose construction environmentalists fully participated (Hochstetler 1997, 2000).

Environmental organizations in Brazil were forming and beginning to mobilize support within this large and growing multi-organizational field. Being an environmental activist did not preclude participating in party organizations, rebuilding student organizations, raising money to support union members on strike, or protesting the high cost of living. Indeed many of the activists who came of age politically during this period engaged in all these activities, experiences that strongly shaped what we call the second and third waves of Brazilian environmentalism. Democratization convinced