Wangari Maathai and Kenya's Green Belt Movement: Exploring the Evolution and Potentialities of Consensus Movement Mobilization

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Social movement research has traditionally focused on conflictual, overtly confrontational approaches to addressing social problems. Consensus movements, such as grassroots self-help movements in the countries of the South, have only recently been studied. Whereas some of these movements employ contentious strategies to influence traditional political arenas and actors, others intentionally remain outside traditional political spheres and use consensual means to achieve their social change objectives. Utilizing Kenya's Green Belt Movement as an example, I argue that consensus strategies present opportunities for movement formation and development in repressive environments. Likewise, the domestic momentum and international exposure generated from consensus action can provide future opportunities for expanding the movement's tactical repertoire.

Introduction

Contemporary social movement theory has focused upon two major theoretical paradigms: the Resource Mobilization-Political Process (RM-PP) model and the New Social Movement-Identity-Oriented (NSM-IO) model. By and large, the social movement literature has favored conflict movements to the neglect of consensus movements. Only recently have a few researchers begun seriously to consider the social change impacts and organizational dynamics of consensus movements (see Lofland 1989; McCarthy and Wolfson 1992; Schwartz and Shuva 1992). This study seeks to contribute to the slowly emerging consensus movement literature with an historical analysis of Kenya's Green Belt Movement.

Herein, the 15-year history of the Green Belt Movement (GBM) will be divided into two major phases. From 1977-1988, the movement steers clear of traditional political arenas, seeking to transform the social arena through reforestation and education. During the second phase, 1989-1994, the GBM officially maintains these non-confrontational goals, while its coordinator, Wangari Maathai, openly challenges political arenas. It is critical to note that throughout both of these stages in the organization's history, GBM has continuously sought to maintain a consensus image or "frame." Consensus, not conflict, has served as the strategic and philosophical foundation for the attainment of GBM's political and social change agenda. This case study analyzes the movement's emergence, goals and objectives, organizational structure, strategies/tactics, and outcomes. Finally, I speculate on the future and draw lessons from the GBM experience for other southern self-help movements.

Definitions

Two general categories of social movements will be discussed: conflict and consensus. Conflict movements compete (or "battle") with other groups or actors whose views or

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agendas are opposed to their own. Consensus movements, on the other hand, are defined by McCarthy and Wolfson (1992:273-4) as "those organized movements for change that find widespread support for their goals and little or no organized opposition." It is important to note that these categories are not permanent and static, but rather over time, changing circumstances may transform consensus movements into conflict movements or (although less likely) vice versa (see McCarthy and Wolfson 1992).

By the term "southern self-help movements," I seek to make both a geographical and typological distinction to refer to a specific genre of social movement actor. These movements are prevalent in what has been called the "Third World," "Fourth World" or "Less Developed Countries;" however since they are largely located in the southern hemisphere, I will refer to these countries more neutrally as the "South." I am not claiming there is any sense of homogeneity in the countries of the south but am merely recognizing self-help groups as a major force for social transformation in that region of the world. Actually, acknowledging the considerable heterogeneity of the South puts this piece in perspective and begs further analysis of this form of social change movement.

Self-help movements engage in collective action to improve conditions of the group directly, and in so doing, correspondingly alter social arenas.[1] For example, an environmental self-help movement might launch a massive reforestation and education program wherein tree planting participants reap the physical benefits of fruits, improved soil fertility, and reliable firewood supplies. At the same time, educating and empowering communities to utilize resources sustainably accrues environmental benefits to the larger society. Broader social transformation is a gradual consequence of such action, but is a longer term objective not always readily apparent to movement participants. Movement leaders, on the other hand, are keenly aware of the macro implications of self-help collective action. They perceive self help as a strategy for simultaneously improving material conditions and empowering participants. As previously mentioned, self-help movements are not inherently consensual and may later adopt more conflictual tactics.

Jacobson (1984) cataloged the proliferation of intergovernmental and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and institutions since the end of World War II. For example, the number of NGOs in the 24 countries of the OECD increased markedly from 1,603 in 1980 to 2,542 in 1990 (*The Economist* 1994:90). Less documented but even more massive has been the explosion of indigenous nongovernmental organizations during this same period.

There are a number of reasons self-help movements have become particularly prevalent in the countries of the South. First, there are large gaps in government social services and a paucity of formal institutions in southern civil society. Second, repressive and sometimes paranoid southern political regimes viciously suppress traditional conflict-oriented social movements. Such activists are perceived as dangerous, seditious, and a threat to stability. Self-help movements are more subtle, and on the surface are often politically benign. Third, the international humanitarian community, including large multilateral financial institutions, have identified indigenous organizations and movements as an effective instrument for the implementation of relief and development programs. As such, they have provided considerable financial support, publicity, and other resources, enabling an expansion of grassroots collective action.

Village-based self-help work is a longstanding tradition in much of the South, as local people have pooled their collective abilities to meet community needs for centuries. However, the organization and formalization of such activities into movements on a regional, national, or international scale, is relatively new. It is not merely self-help action per se that

1. These southern self-help movements should not be confused with northern self-help organizations like Alcoholics Anonymous (see Smith and Pillemer 1983) which primarily aim to correct deviant behavior.

is significant here, but rather visionary and coordinated self-help action on a massive scale that is relevant to students of social movements.

The Two Paradigms: Resource Mobilization-Political Process and New Social Movement-Identity Oriented

In the 1970s and 1980s, social movement theory became bifurcated into two dominant camps, representing both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. On the U.S. side, McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1988) discussed the application of the Resource Mobilization-Political Process (RM-PP) model to social movement analysis. Dismissing the Classical theories of the 1960s that explained collective action as the result of social-psychological factors (i.e., individual social dislocation and deviance), the Resource Mobilization (RM) approach perceives collective action as "rational" attempts by groups seeking to alter social and political norms. Whereas the initial analytical focus of RM was on organizational and institutional factors, McAdam (1982) expanded the model, placing greater emphasis on the political opportunity structure. Now the two theories have essentially been consolidated into one more comprehensive paradigm, referred to here as Resource Mobilization-Political Process (RM-PP).

The New Social Movement-Identity-Oriented (NSM-IO) paradigm is most prevalent in Western European sociological literature. Unlike RM-PP, which is concerned primarily with the components of "strategic action," the NSM-IO approach is more interested in the dynamics of collective identity formation. NSM-IO theorists perceive social movements as the major force for social change in "post-industrial society," seeing them "not as mobilizers of resources to achieve certain ends, but as transforming agents of political life" (Eyerman and Jamison 1991:26).

Mueller (1992:21-22) distinguishes NSM-IO actors from RM-PP actors:

> Within these contexts, the new actor identifies and constructs the meanings that designate the relevance for mobilization of grievances, resources and opportunities.

Yet, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, there appears to be increasing recognition of some convergence between the two schools of theory. RM-PP and NSM-IO no longer seem mutually exclusive and recent theoretical research (Morris and Mueller 1992) focuses on bridging the gap between the two models. This effort principally entails an effort to "dissolve the rigid dichotomy imposed between 'instrumental' and 'expressive' behavior" (Ferree 1992:43). While most of the debate over these two approaches has discussed their many differences, it is their inherent and practical similarities that are of concern here.

Conflict Movements and Consensus Movements

Broadly defined, a social movement is a set of organizations and individuals working toward the same general social change goals. This all-encompassing definition needs a bit of qualification, for it could easily include many nongovernmental organizations and voluntary associations. There are a few factors that distinguish social movement organizations from other types of voluntary organizations. First, the scope of a social movement organization's work must entail substantive activities that aim to realize societal impacts, not merely localized impacts. Thus, the Green Belt Movement, whose nationwide tree planting campaign successfully planted 1 million trees, should be considered a social movement organization, while a girl's club's orchard would not. Second, the scale of a social movement's activities must be of sufficient size and breadth for such societal impact to occur. A small, isolated self-help group that strictly serves to meet the needs of a single village's women seeks a very limited and localized impact. On the other hand, organizations like the Green Belt

Movement attempt to mobilize hundreds of such groups, and thereby achieve society-wide social change. In effect, social movements seek broader transformation, while other voluntary associations maintain more limited goals, scopes, and scales. If these parameters appear fuzzy and indefinite (and admittedly so), it is partially because researchers are still asking precisely what constitutes a social movement.

For this reason I prefer a broad utilitarian conceptualization over more strict definitions. Still, I do not want to get bogged down in terminological controversy over what constitutes a social movement. I want to make one critical point. Social movements include a variety of groups with different strategic orientations and specific agendas. Thus, it is not the practice of challenging governmental or other authorities that defines a social movement, but rather their active pursuit of social change. And yet conflict movements overwhelmingly dominate the social movement literature, to the near exclusion of consensus movements. Mueller (1992:17-18) observes a fundamental preference for conflict movements in the research:

> A distinguishing feature of recent social movement theory has been a narrowing of the phenomena under investigation. . .[W]hereas the collective behavior tradition encompassed movements for institutional change as well as personal change, resource mobilization theorists have 'restricted their focus to movements of institutional change.' [M]uch current theorizing fails to recognize this narrowed focus of attention and assumes a generic social movement as if all mobilizations were alike in terms of the nature of grievances and the degrees of change sought, of access to resources, and of political opportunities.

Not only have social movement researchers favored those seeking "institutional change" over "personal change," they have also concentrated on "conflictual" movements over "consensual" movements.

Recently, interest in consensus movements has emerged. For example, Lofland (1989) has assessed the impacts of the city twinning movement and McCarthy and Wolfson (1992) continue their research of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD). Despite these few exceptions, the RM-PP and NSM-IO models have almost exclusively investigated movements with oppositional stances, most often pitting civil society (or more specifically, sectors of it) against the state. In practice, the terms "protest movement" and "social movement" largely are used interchangeably.

Whether it is the RM-PP examinations of the U.S. civil rights, Indian nationalist, and Polish "Solidarity" movements or NSM-IO studies of the women's, environmental, and peace movements, the preference for conflict movements remains. However, this typological predilection seems to be most prominent in the RM-PP literature. Non-adversarial southern movements could fit into the NSM-IO framework, but the model's proponents concentrate primarily on middle-class struggles in advanced industrial countries. In theory, these movements are "nonpolitical" in the traditional institutional sense, but in practice, they are still fundamentally characterized by an adversarial approach to change.

Herein, I am concerned with a different genre of social movement — those that seek change (e.g., social, cultural, or economic) via self-help activities and not solely by directly confronting political institutions. In effect, old regimes and worldviews are deconstructed and new ones constructed by direct action that circumvents traditional power arenas. This type of movement is based on the realization that governments and societies maintain unjust status quo regimes not merely by traditional means (e.g., laws), but also by their "abilities to shape our worldview" (Gamson 1992:65). Many of these movements need not be perceived as in conflict with their governments because they focus exclusively on "developmental" activities (i.e., self-actualization) and often express indifference regarding traditional political power.[2]

2. I should note here that strategic detachment from traditional power politics characterizes many, but certainly not all, of these self-help movements. Some simultaneously pursue self-help activities and engage in political activism.

It is this vast sector of southern social movements that has largely been ignored by social movement researchers. Many of these movements have been discussed by "developmentalists" as community development groups, women's self-help groups. While many of these are also social movement organizations, they have largely been neglected by social movement research. Some of these movements are centrally organized; others are decentralized and diffuse. Some are international in scope, others are national or regional. Taking many shapes and forms, these movements are inarguably social change agents, transforming their societies with the use of non-adversarial self-help strategies.

For example, the broad-based Sri Lankan Sarvodya movement is an ideologically-grounded "alternative development" movement. As Goulet (1981:1) writes: "Champions of alternative strategies consider people's movements, and not expert planners or bureaucrats, as the preferred agents of social change." In 1958, Sarvodya began as a small rural movement which sought to "develop" Sri Lankan communities by embracing the values of self-reliance, self-sufficiency, and equity. By 1981, it had expanded to include 3,000 villages in a country of 21,000 villages, including 1 million of the 14 million total population (Goulet 1981). The movement neither sought political power nor aimed to influence the government in any way. Gunatilleke (1981:xv) captures the essence of this ideology and strategy:

> Sarvodya is committed to a non-divisive process of change. It perceives social conflicts in traditional and modern society within an ideology of man and society which gives overriding importance to the underlying humanity which includes all conflicting forces. It inserts itself into a community and seeks to loosen the structures of inequality and bring about a social transformation while preserving and strengthening the basic unity of the community. In doing so it seeks to combine the religious methodology of spiritual conversion, with the secular processes of awakening the poor and mobilising them for self-reliance and for a more equitable sharing of power.

In 1978, Goulet (1981:1) perceived Sarvodya to be at a critical juncture, re-evaluating its apolitical position and assessing whether collaboration without co-optation is possible:

> Sarvodya faces a new and difficult challenge: how to relate to the national development strategy of a friendly government in a manner which preserves the Movement's own identity and integrity. For over two decades this grassroots organization has prided itself on being a non-partisan force in Sri Lankan life.

In many ways, Sarvodya is a unique case, for it has profoundly touched the whole of Sri Lankan society. And yet, there are many smaller-scale social movements throughout the South, which, like Sarvodya (in its first 20 years) choose not to become embroiled in power politics, operating instead on the basis of broad consensus. Roughly consistent with stated national development goals, these movements fill institutional social vacancies, social space which southern governments are either unable or unwilling to fill.

I have chosen Kenya's Green Belt Movement for this study, in part because African social movements have been relatively absent from the literature. The vast majority of social movement research discusses collective action in the United States and Western Europe: civil rights, peace, environmental, and women's movements. However, in the past few years, radical social transformation in Eastern Europe has drawn an increasing amount of attention to that region (Tarrow 1991; Scanlan 1991). Likewise, Latin American movements (Escobar and Alvarez 1992; Pagnucco and McCarthy 1991; Mainwaring and Viola 1984) and Asian movements (Kapur 1992; Smith and Pagnucco 1992) have been the subject of a number of recent studies. Still, even in these southern case studies, there remains a preference for movements that fit the predominant "adversarial" mode of traditional political action studied.

It is also important to realize that even those groups that express no political goals and pursue solely developmental activities may still be repressed by governments that perceive all civil society group formation as potentially subversive.

Like Sarvodya in some regards, yet quite different in others, is the Green Belt Movement of Kenya. GBM is a smaller and sectorally focused (environmental) women's self-help movement, but it is similar to Sarvodya in that it has embraced a solely developmental stature for its entire 17 year existence. I look at the Green Belt Movement in detail, focusing on its emergence, goals, organizational structure, strategy/tactics, and finally evaluate its outcomes. I draw conclusions from the movement's overall experience.

The Green Belt Movement: Emergence

> I think that when you look at a tree you planted and see it grow, it is like looking at a child grow. You develop a relationship that is very pleasant. You get to love the tree.
>
> Wangari Maathai

The idea of a grassroots environmental movement was conceived during the 1969 and 1974 political campaigns for the parliamentary seat of Langata District, Nairobi. Campaigning with her husband, Wangari Maathai met many poor constituents and perceived the local need for jobs. At the time, environmental issues had barely reached the international agenda. But Maathai saw a need and had a vision; she created a company called Envirocare, hiring local people to improve the environment of the community. The idea was that local landlords would pay for these maintenance services, such as tree planting. In June 1976, as Envirocare was struggling to survive, Maathai attended the U.N. Conference on Human Settlement in Vancouver, Canada. There she met a number of prominent women like the environmentalist Margaret Mead, Barbara Ward, and Mother Teresa. She also spent a good deal of time at the Forum for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and was able to share ideas and experiences with others "bound by a common desire to work for improved human settlements" (Maathai 1988:6).

Due to a lack of resources, Envirocare soon folded. Yet the rapid events of the first half of 1977 allowed the work to continue. In February, Maathai was elected to the Executive Committee of the National Council of Women of Kenya (NCWK) and assumed a position on the Standing Committee on Environment and Habitat. She proposed a tree planting project, which after some initial opposition, was initiated under the title "Save the Land Harambee" (Harambee is Swahili for "let's all pull together") (Maathai 1988). The first ceremonial tree planting took place on June 5, 1977, World Environment Day, at the Kamukunji grounds in Nairobi. Seven trees were planted, of which only two have survived. As Maathai (1984:8) explains, the second tree planting took place at a local high school and was sponsored by

> Mobil Oil (Kenya) Ltd. who. . .donated the sixty trees we planted on that day. The Save the Land Harambee would probably have taken a very different turn — perhaps no turn at all — had Mobil Oil not supported it in its initial stages when it was more an idea than a movement and needed seed money very urgently.

Thus, institutional funding was crucial at the outset, even before the formal establishment of the mass movement called GBM.

Perhaps the true birth of the GBM occurred during the 1977 U.N. Conference on Desertification in Nairobi. The decision was made to shift from small ceremonial plantings to a massive rural campaign. Mobil Oil again sponsored a planting, but this time it was on land owned by a cooperative of 800 women from Kiambu in the Rift Valley (Maathai 1984). Maathai (1988:6) sees this as a turning point in the emergence of the GBM:

> [W]hat had started simply as an NCWK project was gradually developing into a community activity. And we launched a national campaign to inform the public, through the mass media [radio, television, newspapers, magazines, church meetings, workshops, and seminars], of the dangers of desertification and the necessary action we could take to fight this process.

The idea was well received; many villages inquired about seedlings, and Maathai asked the Department of Forestry for help. Initially, seedlings were provided free, but as requests rapidly grew, a small fee was charged. GBM's close relationship with the Forestry Department reaffirms McCarthy and Wolfson's (1992) contention that the co-optation of state structures by consensus movements will likely enhance resource mobilization. It was only later, when large strips of 1,000 or more trees were planted, did the name "Green Belt Movement" surface.

Maathai's choice of words is telling, for the GBM aims to "fight" "the dangers of desertification." Does this current assertion that there is a "fight" to be waged contradict my earlier claims that this movement is by nature non-conflictual? Not if we consider that the enemy is environmental degradation, an enemy against which all Kenyans can unite in battle. I do not wish to simplify or trivialize the issue, for there are certain interests (e.g., building developers, and the women themselves — killing trees for firewood) who contribute to the problem. However, GBM has not entered the traditional political arena, for example, to lobby for tougher regulations on cutting down trees. Rather, it seeks to plant trees and educate about the causes and effects of ecological destruction. Since one would be hard pressed to find an advocate of deforestation or desertification, the movement acquires a consensual character.

Since reforestation and environmental education were stated goals of the government's development program, and GBM posed no apparent political threat, the Kenyan government expressed no resistance (and even offered small levels of support). GBM set out to address a universal social ill and employed a non-threatening strategy that all sectors of Kenyan society could support.

Looking back on the emergence of the GBM, several key factors should be noted. First, the movement was not rurally generated, but rather was initiated by an educated female elite working through an established organization (NCWK). From the outset, corporate funding from Mobil Oil was crucial as was the support of a host of international organizations (e.g., U.N. Environment Programme, NGOs) and government agencies like the Forestry Department. Using this triad of resources (private corporate, private voluntary, and public), Maathai initiated a massive public information campaign. This strong emphasis on publicity contributed to the massive growth of GBM over the following decade (1977-87).

The structure of political opportunities remained fairly constant at this time. RM-PP theory (McAdam 1982) proposes a direct link between political opportunities and movement emergence. In Kenya, the level of political repression was fairly high, but constant. And, as far as can be determined, there were no noteworthy divisions among political elites at that time.[3] One might claim that Kenya was relatively less repressive than other countries and this facilitated the emergence of GBM. I would argue instead that it was the organization's non-confrontational approach that enabled it to flourish in a politically repressive environment. Maina Kiai (1992:14-15), Executive Director of the Kenya Human Rights Commission, comments:

> Kenya's human rights record has been dismal. Political assassinations, deaths in police custody, detentions without trial and police brutality have been prevalent in Kenya ever since the reign of Kenya's first president, Jomo Kenyatta. . .[and when Daniel Moi assumed the presidency in 1978], government critics were harassed and intimidated through brief arrests and interrogations. By 1980, however, the regime had severely circumscribed freedom of expression and a culture of silence and fear began to permeate society.

But the GBM was not perceived as "government critics." Working through the NCWK and with the Forestry Department ensured the maintenance of cordial relations with the

3. Whereas I believe the structure of political opportunities was of little significance to the emergence of GBM, a non-conflictual movement, I do see these factors as critical to the emergence of conflictual movements. As I will later discuss, the 1991 Pro-Democracy Movement was clearly assisted by growing rifts between President Moi and many of his high level cabinet members.

government and simultaneously lent the movement legitimacy. GBM sought to help fill the gap between the Kenyan government's development rhetoric and its action. Southern governmental rhetoric commonly includes vast social change goals, but there rarely exists the political will or capacity to execute and implement such plans. The resulting gap provides adequate space in which self-help groups can carefully mobilize in a manner perceived as non-threatening to the government. As the short- and long-term objectives are outlined in the next section, it will become further evident that GBM's non-conflictual approach was intentionally employed to maintain broad support (of women's groups, institutional funders, and the government) and to expand the organization. In essence, GBM was establishing a consensual approach to environmental and social transformation.

Wangari Maathai's outgoing personality was also a major asset. She embodies the "charismatic leader" image personified by other great social movement leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr.[4] She is an intelligent, articulate, enthusiastic and energetic woman who naturally inspires others to action. These qualities have endeared her not only to the women of Kenya, but also to those with whom she has come in contact during her extensive travels.

Kapur (1992) emphasizes the influence of face-to-face meetings between Indian nationalists and black Americans on the development of the civil rights movement. Likewise, Maathai herself admits to having been inspired, informed, and energized by contacts with Margaret Mead, Barbara Ward, Mother Theresa and other NGO activists who, like herself, were involved in social change struggles. These important ties were not solely international in scope, for Maathai also networked with other women's leaders in Kenya. For example, in 1977, Dr. Eddah Gachukia was Chair of the NCWK; in 1992, she was the head of the Africa Women Development and Communication Network (Femnet). In 1977, the two women collaborated on the Executive Committee of the NCWK; today they are both seeking to increase the role of women in politics and national decision-making processes.

Tilly (1978) and other RM-PP theorists note the significance of "CATness" (the degree to which potential movement participants perceive themselves as sharing similar characteristics or belonging to the same categories) and "NETness" (the degree to which these people are networked) as fundamental indicators of movement development. Wangari Maathai and the GBM exemplify the importance of such interpersonal contacts and networks to the analysis of social movement emergence and development.

The Green Belt Movement: Goals and Objectives

The official short- and long-term objectives of the Green Belt Movement have been clearly and publicly stated in a host of publications. This is likely due to the demands imposed by international funding sources that require clear statements of goals and activities. Maathai (1984:17) recognizes short-term goals as "very important because mass movements need tangible success stories." The stated short-term goals were listed (Maathai 1984:17-24) as follows:

1) The development of a positive image for women.
2) The promotion of tree planting and agroforestry amongst small-scale farmers (for fuelwood).
3) The creation of employment for the handicapped and school leavers in their own communities.
4) The training of women as cultivators of seedlings.
5) To generate income for women.
6) To educate populations on the inter-relationship of environment and other issues, such as food production and health.

4. Morris (1984) discusses the importance of charismatic leaders (specifically black ministers in southern churches and civil rights organizations). He also notes (1984:285): "Charismatic leadership. . .facilitates the mobilizing and organizing processes of movements." Maathai exemplifies just this type of movement leader.

7) To curb rural migration to urban centres for better prospects.
8) To promote environmental education.
9) To promote soil conservation.

At the top of the list is an enormous challenge: the empowerment of women. Traditionally, African women have been subjugated; the GBM overtly states a desire to liberate women and assist them in realizing their own potentials. On the surface, this goal is in line with Kenyan "development" rhetoric and would be difficult for the government to condemn, but in practice it could have profound implications should women begin to question their place and challenge the social and political institutions that keep them subservient. Goals 4 and 5 deliberately aim to facilitate this process, for education (knowledge) and income-generation (money) translate into increased power. Even the other seemingly more general goals (6, 8, 9) are aimed primarily at women. But men are not excluded from the process. In fact, Maathai sees them as important potential beneficiaries as well:

> I think when we talk about the position of women in Africa and see how miserable it is, quite often we forget that these miserable women are married to miserable men. They are oppressed together, and it is only a small group of elite middle-class Africans who can say that they have made it. What I'd really like to see is not just an improvement in the condition of women, but the economic and political improvement of the African economy, so that all people can move forward (Maathai quoted in Hultman 1992:2).

Extending the potential constituency even further, GBM directly targets two other alienated segments of society: school leavers and handicapped persons (Goal 3). By employing these marginalized groups, GBM hopes to increase rural opportunities for economic advancement, thereby stemming the current tide of rapid urban migration (Goal 7). All of these short-term objectives aim to address immediate human needs, while simultaneously building future capacities: enhancing local people's skills and awareness.

The movement's long-term goals have been stated in a promotional pamphlet aimed to solicit members and funders. They are as follows:

1) To avert desertification processes through tree planting and soil and water conservation.
2) Promote environmental conservation and sustainable development.
3) Promote indigenous trees and shrubs which are rapidly becoming extinct as promotion of exotic species intensifies.
4) Promote a positive image of women by projecting their leading role in national development.
5) Encourage indigenous initiatives to restore self-confidence in a people overwhelmed by foreign "experts".
6) Promote the protection and maintenance of the environment through seminars, conferences, workshops, etc.
7) Develop replicable methodology for rural development.
8) Carry out research in conjunction with Universities and research institutions.
9) Strengthen and empower groups and staff through training and informing.
10) Encourage women to make their own decisions, identify their own objectives and strategies and implement them in order to benefit from their labour.
11) Provide a Forum at which the voices of those working at the grassroots (especially women) can articulate preferences by words and deeds.
12) Emphasize humans as a main resource, as compared to funds, formal education or specialization.
13) Seek to encourage participants to empower themselves, strengthen their self-confidence and self-esteem and cultivate pride in their cultural values and heritage.
14) Strive to share the experience gained in the GBM with others in the region and the world.
15) Address itself to the poorer sectors of societies and endeavour to alleviate poverty.
16) In its efforts of re-afforestation GBM is contributing to reduction of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and the prospects of climate change.

17) Encourage spiritual and cultural values which link people with their roots and with Nature and God. Our traditional values and systems have been eroded, undervalued and destroyed in the process of colonization and modern mode of development. In that process many people have become economically, socially and politically marginalized. It is the spiritual and cultural values which can contribute towards restoration of self-confidence, self empowerment and recognition of the person as the greater resource to self and country.

An additional long-term goal of the movement was to plant and have 10 million surviving trees in the organization's first 10 years. This goal has been achieved, albeit a bit late.

This long-term goal list can be divided in two general categories. First are those objectives that aim primarily to protect and improve the natural environment (Goals 1, 2, 3, 6, 16). The Movement's educational (environmental awareness) and tree planting activities directly contribute to long-term environmental protection and reforestation processes. The second set of goals, perhaps more important to the organization, entails increasing human competencies, skills, and self-images, primarily those of women (Goals 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17). This category is almost overemphasized as certain key words and phrases are repeated: "positive images of women," "restore self-confidence," "empower groups," "empower themselves," and so on. These goals illustrate an exclusive focus on direct social and economic transformation, and express no overt political agenda. GBM has thus been able to promote transformational and even somewhat revolutionary goals without repression because it presents no direct threat to the decision-making elite.[5]

The Green Belt Movement: Organizational Structure

Gamson (1990) and Staggenborg (1989) delineate two basic organizational characteristics for the study of social movements: 1) the degree of formalization, and 2) the degree of centralization. GBM is characterized by a highly formalized structure with a mix of centralized and decentralized features. This peculiar organizational structure is evident upon investigation of the movement's historical development and operational framework.

From the very beginning, extant organizations facilitated the development of GBM. The Movement was first established under the auspices of the National Council of Women of Kenya (NCWK), a legitimate and respected organization with a massive nationwide membership. At first glance, the GBM appears to be a highly centralized organization, run by Maathai, a prototypical charismatic leader. Upon more detailed examination, however, the dual and complex nature of the operations reveals itself. In the center, GBM has a core bureaucracy of paid office staff, while at the grassroots, members are mobilized in small decentralized groups. Linking these two levels is a large corps of field workers.

The entire responsibility for movement participation has been placed at the grassroots level. After initial information dissemination (concerning environmental problems and ways to address them), local people must take the initiative, contacting the GBM field staff or office

5. Throughout this paper, I have been speaking of the GBM as an agent of social, environmental, and economic transformation. While on the surface many of GBM's programs (e.g., education, tree planting) seem to be relatively benign attempts to cope with exploitative and disempowering circumstances, a longer term perspective is necessary to see the transformative potential of such action. Most of the rural women who participate have no formal education, are suppressed by traditional African female roles, and see little power or opportunity to effect change. Their participation in the GBM helps them see their situation in a new light. Their achievements and benefits from tree planting, coupled with empowering educational programs, gives them confidence and helps them to see and develop new personal power and strengths. This is a critical first step in the process of cognitive liberation, and holds enormous transformative potential. Transformation entails profound and fundamental changes. The GBM has not sought systemic political transformation; however, the 1 million trees planted and widespread awareness of environmental degradation represents at least a significant contribution to environmental transformation. Likewise, the economic self-reliance and independence fostered among participating women is economically, psychologically, and socially transformative. While systemic changes may not have been achieved, a groundwork for transformation is being laid.

to receive an application. Maathai (1984:25-26) sees these application forms as "very important" and not merely procedural:

> The purpose and relevance becomes evident as one studies them because the GBM is more than just planting trees. It is an educational experience aimed at changing mental attitudes towards the environment through greater awareness, understanding and appreciation. Establishing Green Belts is easy once a person has met the requirements in Form I.

At every stage in the process, action is non-coercive and local. Two key organizational attributes have been flexibility and voluntary group formation at the local level:

> The GBM has no rigid rules or operation procedures. It has developed a set of broad and flexible guidelines which give general guidance to the participants. But the day-to-day activities are allowed to evolve around the communities involved (Maathai 1984:25).

> During the period of information dissemination, it is necessary to encourage the interested people to form a group. . .Nevertheless, groups should be formed freely — without coercion. This is absolutely essential to the cohesion and endurance of the group. In Kenya, women commonly form groups and this reduces some of the work in initially establishing a movement (Maathai 1988:47).

The philosophy is one of self-help. Kenyan women are constantly working in indigenously generated groups as they undertake a variety of tasks. Since such associational groups are common and well established, setting up new groups or using existing ones is not at all problematic.

At the center of the GBM, Maathai heads an office staff of 40 and field staff of about 750 (Maathai 1991). This extensive bureaucracy has been necessitated by the rigorous requirements of international funding sources. Vast resources are available to indigenous environmental and developmental groups like GBM but are contingent upon strict maintenance of accountability. GBM has formed its bureaucracy to meet these needs. Field staff carry the dual responsibilities of teaching new groups and monitoring local level activities. Grassroots-level work is facilitated, processed, and monitored by a combination of record keeping and site visits. There is a booklet of forms and reports that must be completed at the local level and sent to the office monthly. The accuracy of these forms is assessed by field workers making regular site visits (e.g., to make sure the number of trees reported are still alive and being maintained). Essentially, the bureaucracy serves both to facilitate the movement's work and maintain accountability.

To summarize, central staff and grassroots movement members/activists play very different but complementary roles. Whereas policy and coordination emanate from the core, these policies have embraced a philosophy of decentralization, flexibility, and local control. Certain general guidelines (e.g., reporting) must be followed, but the specific activities of each local group are developed, organized, and implemented locally. Thus, GBM is characterized by a highly formalized, three-tiered organizational structure: a "centralized" coordinating office, a local membership organized into small groups or "chapters," and a cadre of liaisons linking the two.

The Green Belt Movement (1977-1988): Strategy and Tactics

When discussing strategy/tactics and outcomes, it is useful to differentiate two distinct phases in the organization's history. The primary orientation of the first phase (1977-1988), tree planting and educational activities, provided a favorable strategy for movement expansion. These activities have been effective because they are simple, visible, and replicable. Tree planting is a low technology undertaking; the necessary skills and training can be executed locally without outside "experts." It is also inexpensive, for seeds are locally available and nursery establishment is labor intensive, not resource intensive. Additionally, the direct

benefits gained by movement participants (money and trees) eliminate the "free-rider" problem that haunts other types of social movements (i.e., those that do not have a "self-help" component). Schwartz and Paul (1992) assert that compared to conflict movements, consensus movements find it difficult to recruit mass memberships. However, due to the direct incentives for participation that they engender, this may not hold true for the self-help species of consensus movements.

The organizational structure of decentralized decision making and action complemented by central coordination, guidance, and monitoring was also an important strategy component. Had a high level of centralized control and inflexibility been attempted, recruitment of such a vast membership would have been unlikely. The decentralized structure allowed maximum participation at the rural area, and enabled members to feel themselves in control and empowered.

The educational strategic component is hard to measure but crucial to increasing consciousness. It is possible for members to be unaware of the larger implications of their local activities. By teaching participants about conservation, GBM creates a sense of collective responsibility and consciousness. Knowledge is power. In this case, environmental know-how is employed simultaneously to improve human conditions and the environment. And, the strategy is self-perpetuating and inherently expansionary, for as participants experience short-term benefits (and their neighbors see them as well), the likelihood of long-term movement growth and intensification is enhanced.

Another strategy that assisted organizational expansion and provided a sense of permanence was the Movement's ties to the outside world. Pagnucco, Smith, and Crist (1992) discuss the importance of links to international organizations and the media for social movements operating in repressive countries. GBM gained a high level of international visibility and was able to enlist the support of a number of large bilateral and multilateral funding sources. In addition to small contributions from individuals all over the world, GBM has received grants from the Norwegian Agency for International Development, Danish Voluntary Fund, African Development Foundation (U.S.), and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (including a $100,000 grant in 1981) (Maathai 1991:75). Not only did these resources provide the short-term benefit of increased infrastructural capacities, but they also afforded protection from government repression. The work of GBM and Maathai in particular had become internationally renowned.

The Green Belt Movement (1977-1988): Outcomes

In many respects, the GBM's first decade was a resounding success. As previously mentioned, GBM's large staff monitors field level activities and processes the many required documents. The maintenance of scrupulous records (i.e., counting the number of trees planted and later re-checking to see how many have survived) has enabled the organization to keep close tabs on the movement's progress. The tree planting accomplishments of the first decade have been well publicized. As Maathai (1992:25) reports:

> To date, some 10 million trees have been planted and have survived — a survival rate of about 70-80 per cent. Up to 80,000 women are today involved in work at nursery sites. Gradually. . .people learned that trees prevent soil erosion and the consequent loss of soil fertility. They came to see the link between loss of soil fertility, poor crop yields and famine.

Critical to this success was the concrete and tangible nature of the movement's short-term goals, such as tree growing and income generation. The benefits from these activities (increased income and wood products) were reaped immediately, boosting members' interest in continued participation. The visibility of GBM activities and progress also hastened the expansion of the Movement to one of 80,000 participants. Both by observation and word of

mouth, the work of the GBM spread. Neighbors could see the trees growing and many, in turn, formed their own groups. The work was both simple and easily replicable.

The effectiveness of the educational campaigns is much more difficult to quantify and evaluate. It is likewise difficult to measure qualitative benefits such as "empowerment" and "self-esteem." Clearly there have been significant spinoff effects of the highly successful tree planting campaign in terms of empowerment and the like. And while the educational component defies statistical assessment, it is precisely these "consciousness raising" activities that lie at the heart of social transformation. At one level, the massive growth of the organization signals that the publicity campaign has successfully created a greater awareness of environmental issues. Likewise, the rapid growth of the environmental NGO sector in Kenya in the wake of GBM testifies to greater awareness and action. However, the true effects of the "educational" and "empowerment" campaigns may not have yet been seen.

The massive growth of the organization was in part due to the continuous recognition of Maathai, whose work and vision have brought international acclaim. She has received numerous awards including the 1984 Right Livelihood Award (Alternative Nobel Prize) and most recently, the 1991 Africa Prize. But perhaps the most significant outcome of the first decade was the building of ties with other environmental organizations around the world. These international networks and visibility have protected Maathai and the GBM throughout the next phase of the organization's history. When Maathai began to publicly criticize government actions in 1989, she was too internationally well known for them to persecute, and the GBM was too well established to disband.

Challenging Governmental Authority: Wangari Maathai's Entry into the Formal Political Arena (1989-1994)[6]

A series of events involving GBM founder and coordinator Wangari Maathai constitutes a second phase in the organization's history. The second phase was to a large extent expedited by the visibility of the first decade. Even in this second phase, as an organization, the GBM continues to embrace a non-confrontational strategy, enabling it to co-exist alongside an increasingly hostile government. In this period, Maathai personally has become more politically vocal and overtly adversarial. This increasing political action was instigated by the Kenyan government's 1989 announcement of plans to build a $200 million 60-story skyscraper with a 30-foot statue of President Moi in front of it in Nairobi's Uhuru Park. While Maathai was always "political" in the broader sense, her campaign against this "white elephant" represents her first direct confrontation with the state.

Outraged by the environmental implications of the proposal, Maathai immediately activated to prevent the plan and became embroiled in a heated exchange with government ministers. She quickly became the leading opponent of the project and was joined by Public Law Institute Director Dr. Oki Ooko Ombaka, scientists and researchers at the National Museums of Kenya, and the Architectural Association of Kenya. Maathai issued a number of letters (to ministers) in opposition to the plan and others to environmental groups, seeking their support. For example, when the Minister for Local Government issued a statement reaffirming the project and labeling its critics as "ignorant and ill-informed," Maathai immediately responded:

6. The historical account represented in this section has been drawn from the following untitled articles in *The Weekly Review* (Nairobi, Kenya): "Bad news for Times complex opponents;" "Presidential seal of approval;" "Maathai loses by a technicality;" "Maathai's tribulations escalate;" "Maathai-bashing continues;" "The walls come tumbling down;" "A strike for freedom;" "Chaos and panic in Nairobi." Other information was derived from The Associated Press: "Court dismisses suit to bar Africa's tallest building;" Reuter Textline Africa: "Kenya: Donors demolish plans for Kenya Times Media skyscraper;" and The Xinhua Overseas News Service: "Kenyan lands minister sacked;" "Kenyan opposition in bid to rally forces against Kanu in polls;" "Kenyan opposition leaders urged to unite."

> It is impossible to persuade environmentalists, Nairobi residents and interested observers that the 60-storey Times Complex is a service they ought to appreciate. In the whole world, enemies of the environment, and those who promote development with destruction and a development that is not sustainable, minimise the outcry of the people. They dismiss the voice of the people as the voice of the ignorant, of the unprogressive, of the primitive and of the irrelevant. Mr. Minister, with much respect, your honourable attitude is prevalent among politicians, industrialists, investors, the rich and the powerful (*Weekly Review* October 10, 1989:24).

She pleaded with the managing director of the Kenya Times Media Trust and contacted the British High Commission in an attempt to locate Robert Maxwell, a partner in the project, to inform them of the environmental and recreational implications of locating the building in the park. She appealed to the directors of the Kenya Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (KENGO) and African Network of Environmental NGOs (ANEN) for their support, but all of her efforts seemed to be for naught. The government was determined to go ahead with this prestige project; it was to be the tallest building in Africa. President Moi gave his seal of approval and a small groundbreaking ceremony was held. But Maathai was also determined. By the end of November, numerous letters supporting her were printed in *The Weekly Review*.

On November 24, 1989, Maathai filed suit with the High Court, seeking a permanent injunction to stop the project. Her suit was rejected on a technicality, as Justice Norbury Dugdale ruled: "Maathai as an individual had no locus standi (right of action) on behalf of the public. The only authority empowered to institute such a suit would be the attorney general" (*Weekly Review* December 15, 1989:8). So, Maathai immediately contacted the attorney general and urged him to respond on the public's behalf; he refused.

Having greatly annoyed the government, a hostile backlash began. Within a week, President Moi criticized Maathai and other opponents as "having insects in their heads," and in a Jamhuri (Independence) Day speech "wondered why the women of Kenya had not taken any steps to ostracize their 'wayward' colleague. The president also derided the Green Belt Movement as having done nothing for the environment except put up signboards" (*Weekly Review* December 22, 1989:9). Kanu Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organization (KMYWO), the ruling party's major women's organization, responded to the president's challenge, urging that Maathai be expelled from the party. Suddenly, the GBM was given just 24 hours to vacate the government-owned offices it had occupied for the past 10 years.

Obstinate, Maathai lobbied internationally, rallying both environmental groups and donors to her cause. This is an excellent example of the utilization of "international political alliances" (Pagnucco, Smith, and Crist 1992:21) by a social movement actor to manipulate a desired outcome in the domestic arena. Eventually, the donor community pressured the Kenyan government into shelving the project. Maathai's long and lonely crusade had finally ended in victory. The significance of this victory had even wider implications, in terms of "framing" and providing "cognitive cues" for pro-democracy activists. Maathai had demonstrated the efficacy of political protest. A cadre of intellectual elite immediately mobilized to exploit the newly exposed cracks and deteriorating "absolute power" image so long cultivated by the Moi regime.

However, Maathai's political triumph proved costly to the GBM. Not only was the Movement evicted from its government-owned office, but also Wilberforce Kisiero announced that he was banning Maathai from entering his district. Then, the Registrar-General, Joseph King'arui, ordered GBM to furnish his office with audited accounts for the last five years. Suddenly the Movement was being harassed both at the center and at the grassroots. Maathai feared this backlash

> would continue to antagonize the employees of her movement in the field, who (she claimed) were already facing hostile reception from the local people to the extent that they were now abandoning their duties of tending to seedlings in nurseries (*Weekly Review* January 12, 1990:18).

To ameliorate the negative impact her personal actions had on the Movement, Maathai sought a truce. After the initial government harassment, *The Weekly Review* reported (January 12, 1990:18) Maathai "has since issued cautious and conciliatory statements, praising the government at every opportunity and promising to continue complementing its efforts in improving the environment." A shrewd and crafty woman, Maathai found herself walking a very fine line: objecting to the government and praising it almost simultaneously. Even though GBM itself has remained non-partisan and non-conflictual, her protests have had repercussions for the organization. The construction of a highly visible international profile and significant level of international institutional support in the early years proved critical to survival. Had the organization been small and isolated, the government would have easily quelled Maathai's personal rebellion and repressed the organization. Even with the high profile, the GBM was not immune to limited domestic harassment and intimidation by local officials. Some members left the movement, fearing association with Maathai's GBM would be perceived as radical or seditious.

Maathai's more recent activities have concentrated increasingly on political reform and human rights. As a co-founder and steering committee member of the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD), she was a major actor in the campaign for multi-party democracy. The Kenyan pro-democracy movement gained momentum in 1991 as political opponents intensified criticism of the Moi government. Accusations of corruption, the suspicious death of Foreign Affairs Minister Robert Ouko in February 1990 and other splits among ruling elites provided the political opportunity for increased pressure.[7] Moi responded fiercely, imprisoning numerous political opponents. Amnesty International condemned the imprisonments as did the U.S. government which eventually withheld significant amounts of aid to the Kenyan government.[8] The Moi regime was experiencing a crisis of legitimacy and found itself rapidly losing face in the international community. Finally, in December 1991, Moi capitulated by legalizing political parties and agreeing to hold multi-party elections.

In January 1992, Maathai was arrested for "rumour-mongering" with other FORD leaders who had called a press conference to accuse the government of plans to hand over power to the military. Her arrest drew extraordinary international attention, as a host of U.S. legislators and Latin American activists issued strong condemnations of the harsh government action.[9] She was soon released, but this heightened level of political activism led many to speculate on her future political plans. In March she joined a group of women hunger striking for the release of 52 alleged political prisoners. The protesters set up a makeshift shelter in Uhuru Park, which they labeled "Freedom Corner." Soon a large troop of riot police attacked the peaceful demonstration; Maathai was "seriously injured" and taken to the hospital where she was said to have been unconscious over the next night. The brutal police action

7. As election day approached, signs of deepening rifts within the ruling Kanu party were evident as President Moi fired ministers at a rapid pace. In October and November 1992, Moi sacked four ministers, including Darius Mbela, the Minister for Lands and Housing on November 18. Unlike in the case of the consensual GBM, the changing structure of political opportunities was critical for the emergence and sustenance of the conflictual pro-democracy movement. The pro-democracy movement fits well into the RM-PP model precisely because of its conflictual nature.

8. In a June 1992 speech, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Herman Cohen stated "In November, 1991, to underscore our concern about the need for political and economic reform in Kenya, we decided, with other donors, to withhold fast-disbursing assistance to Kenya. The United States withheld $28 million of its planned FY92 economic development to Kenya." This text is reported in "A review of the last six months," *The Weekly Review*, July 3, 1992.

9. "Kenya: Latin Americans condemn 'Green Belt' founders arrest," Inter Press Service, January 17, 1992, reported condemnations of Maathai's arrest by Omar Ovalles (President, Federation of Environmental Organizations of Venezuela), Manuel Baquedano (Chair, Chilean Institute of Political Ecology), Argentinian environmental activist Miguel Grimberg and Thais Corral (coordinator of Brazil's Network for the Protection of the Human Species). Also, Susanne Fowler, "Arrest of Kenya leader Maathai draws fire," *The Chicago Tribune*, January 26, 1992 reported that Senators N. Kassenbaum, P. Simon, B. Mikulski, P. Wellstone, P. Leahy, A. Gore, E. Kennedy and J. Chaffee sent a joint telegram to President Moi "urging his government to dismiss the charges. . .[and warned that] such arrests could further strain relations between Washington and Nairobi."

was officially condemned by the opposition parties, as well as the diplomatic missions of Germany, Great Britain, and the United States.

Throughout 1992, Maathai continued to be active in FORD and during the summer was even endorsed as a presidential candidate by a group of prominent women colleagues. Rejecting the offer, Maathai focused her attention on reconciliation of the fragmented and factionalized opposition parties. Establishing the Middle Ground Group (MGG) in late September, Maathai attempted to reunite the divided FORD party. Realizing that a divided opposition would undoubtedly fail to defeat Moi and the Kanu ruling party, on November 10 she proposed the opposition rally around a compromise ticket of Oginga Odinga (FORD - Kenya) for president and Mwai Kibaki (Democratic Party) for vice president. Unable to secure an agreement, on November 30 Maathai was urged to meet with Kibaki and Kenneth Matiba (FORD - Asili) to try to consolidate the Kikuyu (ethnic) vote. However, despite repeated efforts, none of the seven opposition party leaders were able to agree on a collective ticket.

The elections were held on December 29, 1992, and despite numerous allegations of fraud and irregularities, Moi emerged victorious. Foreign observers and opposition leaders criticized the process as fraught with corruption. Nonetheless, Moi's victory has somewhat enhanced his regime's legitimacy in both domestic and international arenas. Still, U.S. bilateral assistance to the Kenyan government remains on hold, pending further improvements in human rights and accountability. Throughout 1993, international confidence in the Moi government was compromised by numerous corruption scandals and the president's wavering commitment to structural adjustment reforms.

The impact of these developments on the GBM is uncertain. Maathai's outspoken criticism of the government could exacerbate further regulation of the Movement, and possible repression. While her activism has not endeared her to the entrenched political establishment, she has continued to confront the government. For example, in response to Moi's self-fulfilling prophesy that multi-party politics would lead to tribal violence, Maathai attempted to convene a seminar on ethnic conflict in Nakuru town (U.S. State Department 1994). Police, armed and with attack dogs, prevented anyone from entering the meeting site. Maathai then tried twice more, unsuccessfully, to hold the seminar. The provincial commissioner accused her of tribal incitement, and KANU MP Paul Chepkok went so far as to threaten her with circumcision if she were to return to the Rift Valley Province again (U.S. State Department 1994). Once again, Maathai resorted to the legal system and filed an injunction with the High Court to prevent the state from impeding the seminar. Undeterred, she formed a resettlement volunteer service to assist refugees of the ethnic clashes, and compiled information and published leaflets on atrocities committed against the Kikuyu people and others (Awori 1993).

In response to numerous death threats and repeated intimidation, Maathai spent two months of 1993 in hiding. Once again, her high profile and stature translated into both domestic and international pressure on Moi. On March 17, eight prominent Kenyan women politicians called on Moi to halt his government's intimidation tactics (Inter Press Service March 17, 1993). Then, on April 18, former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev sent a letter to Moi requesting him to intervene personally to ensure Maathai's safe passage to Kyoto, Japan to attend the International Green Cross's inaugural meeting. Hoping to avert renewed international criticism, Moi claimed she is free to travel and denied his government had been intimidating her. She emerged from hiding the next day.

Since the election, Maathai has remained persistent and stalwart. Each time the government has pursued actions she considers to be unjust, she responds rapidly, utilizing the media and courts to wage her battles. In September 1993, Maathai called a press conference and threatened to sue the government for its failure to stop ethnic violence in the Rift Valley (Inter Press Service September 6, 1993). Maathai's high profile protests, often resorting to

constitutional appeals, have successfully subjected the government to unwanted international scrutiny. President Moi has been hesitant to jeopardize a resumption of foreign aid by lashing out at Maathai and other opponents. Still, the future is uncertain, and only time will tell if and how the increased politicization of Wangari Maathai will affect the GBM in the long run.

The Green Belt Movement (1989-1994): Domestic Stagnation and International Expansion

The core goals and strategies of the GBM have not been fundamentally altered during this period of increasing politicization of Kenyan society.[10] When the country prepared for its first multi-party elections since independence, and Maathai assumed a leadership role in the struggle for democracy, the GBM maintained its strict focus on consensually-based social transformation. In such volatile times, this continued detachment from the political was peculiar, but it was no accident. The GBM maintained its carefully cultivated image as a purely development-focused organization. As such, the government has been relatively unable to touch it. It is protected by the same laws as other NGOs, both national and international. If GBM were to cross the boundary and venture even slightly into the political arena, it would be inviting a potentially harsh government response. And since Maathai began to criticize the government four years ago, the Moi regime has been watching GBM very carefully, waiting for it to make the wrong move.

Thus, in the domestic sphere, this period does not seem to reflect any great change in the Movement's goals, organizational structures, or outcomes. The work continues, but the organization's rapid expansion has ended. Many GBM members dropped out during this most recent period of Maathai's vocal political opposition. In response to these new obstacles and organizational difficulties, Maathai and her staff have been trying to stabilize the numbers and dispel fears with the old GBM adage: "You can have power, you can lead yourself" (Kleine 1991:41).

The only significant addition to the GBM agenda in recent years has been the desire to spread the movement's successful organizational framework to other African countries. In 1989, a number of environmentalists from Botswana, Uganda, Somalia, and Ethiopia gathered in Nairobi for UNEP-sponsored training and to observe the work of the GBM. Participants expressed considerable interest in replicating the GBM model to organize action in similar ecologically endangered areas. Maathai and her staff facilitated workshops to train activists toward these ends. Later that year, however, Maathai's full attention became focused upon the Uhuru Park building issue, and until mid-1992, the GBM was unable to follow up.

On August 8, 1992, the Pan-African Green Belt Movement (PAGBM) was established, in part as an outcome of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. A press release noted that the Nairobi-based organization will seek:

> [T]o get ordinary Africans involved in the protection of the environment, creating public awareness on environmental issues. . .The PAGBM, which will be coordinated by Kenyan environmentalist Wangari Maathai, will organize projects of tree-planting, farming and public education in the sub-

10. Schwartz and Paul (1992:218-220) assert that an inherent weakness of consensus movements is their inability to adapt to changing environments due to fear of institutional support withdrawal: "The structural constraints of consensus movements thus create strategic rigidity that limits their capacity to adopt new goals and tactics. . . " In most cases, they believe, these traits prohibit the successful transformation of consensus movements into conflict movements. GBM in this second phase is a fine example, awkwardly maintaining the "old line" while its vocal coordinator has undertaken a host of new political agendas.

saharan region. Gabriel Yes Haile of Ethiopia and Ken Lukyamuzi of Uganda were appointed chairman and secretary of the continental body (Xinhua General Overseas Service August 8, 1992).

This type of networking and diffusion of tactics has historically characterized numerous social change movements. Kapur (1992) demonstrated the considerable degree to which U.S. civil rights activists were informed by Gandhi and the Indian Nationalists. This entailed both face-to-face contacts and indirect contacts. Pagnucco and McCarthy (1991) reveal similar links between U.S. and European peace activists and the adoption of nonviolent direct action in Latin America (including the establishment of SERPAJ [Service for Peace and Justice]). Similar lessons are being learned by African environmentalists as they meet Maathai at conferences, are trained by her staff, and read her books. The formal creation of the PAGBM, with Maathai at the helm and a mandate similar to that of GBM Kenya, will likely accelerate the movement's diffusion throughout the continent.

Conclusions

The ultimate impact of GBM on Kenyan (and now African) society has yet to be seen. But the past 15 years of experience is instructive. GBM has successfully mobilized large numbers of Kenyans to redress social and environmental ills by maintaining a non-adversarial stature. This consensual orientation allowed GBM to flourish in the face of a severely repressive political regime. The Movement has served to transform Kenyan communities by empowering them to help themselves. At the micro-level, both concrete (increased incomes and trees) and abstract (empowerment, self-confidence, social consciousness) benefits have been realized. At the macro-level, a host of environmental organizations have followed GBM, and ecological degradation has gained widespread recognition as a critical issue.

Self-help movements like GBM are prevalent throughout the South, and are transforming social, cultural, economic, and environmental arenas. GBM has consciously employed a non-conflictual strategy to undertake this work. Seeking not political reform, GBM instead has sought to recruit the disempowered and assist them in changing the face of Kenyan society through their own self-help activities. Now that the political arena is slowly opening, the Movement may choose to reassess its strategy. The elections may signal a slow process of political liberalization in Kenya, thereby allowing GBM to expand its tactical repertoire (e.g., lobby for environmental protection legislation) without fear of repression.[11] Such a shift is by no means inevitable; yet surely a more open and participatory system would encourage such expansion. If these political reforms fail to materialize, GBM can be expected to hold steadfastly to the goals and strategy that have successfully served it for the past decade and a half.

The changing nature of the international arena will also impact this sector of self-help movements. In the post-Cold War period, U.S. foreign policy toward Africa is no longer driven by an anti-communist ideological imperative. There is no longer ample justification for hefty aid packages to prop up politically repressive regimes. More likely, assistance will be tied to the protection of human rights and democracy. Clough (1992:117) observes a lack of official U.S. government strategic interest in Africa[12] and thus recommends:

11. As Pagnucco, Smith, and Crist (1992:9) report, Tilly's concept of "tactical repertoire" includes "an understanding of the restrictions that context places on the available means which groups may employ at any given turn." It is these "contexts" which have forced GBM to maintain its "neutral" stance and limited its activities to those solely of the "self-help" variety. It is these changing political "contexts" that may facilitate a tactical expansion.

12. Clough (1992) argues that American Foreign Policy toward Africa has been marked by gross inconsistency and largely aided "African rulers at the expense of African civil society." Such was propelled by the fight against communism. Therefore, the post-Cold War era presents an opportunity to limit our damaging official policy and allow private voluntary efforts to assist in the development of civil society.

> The primary goal of U.S. policy should be to expand and deepen contacts between America's third sector and African civil society. This would facilitate the development of a diverse network of personal and institutional linkages that would empower Africans. . .

Such a reorientation of efforts would significantly benefit self-help movements by enabling greater networking, funding, and institutionalization. Likewise, the Clinton Administration's emerging foreign policy reform includes a reorganization of the Agency for International Development (AID) in which increasing assistance will be channeled through the non-governmental sector.

As political liberalization continues throughout Latin America, Africa, and Eastern Europe, social movement researchers should pay close attention to this movement species. The decreasing likelihood of repression will stimulate a growth of grassroots movements, both conflictual and consensual in nature. As fledgling democratic governments struggle with the burdensome challenges of development and modernization, grassroots organizations will (by necessity) surface to meet local needs. These self-help groups will fill the empty spaces in civil society where governmental rhetoric and reality fail to meet.

Wangari Maathai's future aspirations remain something of a mystery. She is a woman of great vision and energy. In spite of the tremendous achievements of GBM, these accomplishments appear to be mere prologue to a greater mission. Her environmental activism is becoming increasingly intertwined with struggles for women's rights and political liberalization. Surely she values the work of GBM, but this is now looking like the means to a greater end. The fostering of awareness, consciousness, and empowerment seem to be of mounting importance. Maathai perceived the December 1992 election as a unique and critical opportunity for Kenyans to stimulate change. In interviews she has underscored the "lack of leadership" in Kenya and publicly asserted that: "The environmental movement has become part and parcel of the pro-democracy movement" (Hultman 1992:3). Throughout 1993 and 1994, Maathai has spent much of her time working on human rights and refugees issues, in response to the ethnic clashes that continue to plague the Kenyan countryside.

Herein, I have sought to provide an in-depth analysis of Kenya's Green Belt Movement and the activities of its founder, Wangari Maathai. As this investigation reveals, an array of strategies enabled the development and institutionalization of GBM. First, GBM embraced a non-adversarial philosophy of social change, enabling movement emergence under repressive conditions. Second, existing organizations were utilized at both the macro-level (foundation under the auspices of NCWK) and micro-level (local women's groups). Third, interpersonal contacts with other activists influenced Maathai and further enhanced her naturally charismatic leadership abilities. Fourth, the establishment of international links (with public and private institutions) secured diverse sources of funding and extensive publicity, and thereby facilitated rapid organizational expansion and development. Later, these connections protected the Movement from potentially severe government retribution for Maathai's public criticism. Fifth, strong leadership at the center and flexibility at the grassroots created a balanced organizational structure. Sixth, the clear articulation of short- and long-term goals based on simple, visible, and replicable activities provided an appropriate and attainable vision and strategy for change. Each of these factors was critical to the development and sustenance of GBM as a consensus movement.

However, the tenacious activism of Wangari Maathai since 1989 provides additional lessons for consensus movements in the South. The partnerships and alliances these movements and their leaders build with others overseas can provide opportunities for more traditional political action in the future. This is not to discount the importance and efficacy of activities like tree planting and environmental education. Such social change strategies have played an important role in Kenya's emerging environmental movement. Yet, conflict and consensus movements are neither permanent nor static. While GBM has officially remained a non-political, non-partisan strategy, its leader has become one of Kenya's pre-eminent pro-

democracy and human rights advocates. There is an important lesson here for activists throughout the South: Self-help activities can enable social movements to form and take root in repressive political climates. Domestic momentum, teamed with international connections and exposure, can provide some protective cover for future expansion of the movement's tactical repertoire. In the case of the GBM, Maathai's transition from consensus to conflict tactics was directly linked to the political opportunity structure. And yet, Maathai's prominence and courage enabled her to influence or "ripen" the political climate for further dissent and political pressure (namely, the multi-party democracy movement).

Both conflict movements and consensus movements play decisive roles in struggles for social change in the countries of the South. And as the experience of Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement illustrates, there is often little more than a fine line dividing the two. GBM's experience is instructive for other southern movements seeking to build organizational strength and efficacy in repressive environments. While other southern self-help movements may differ from GBM in size or specific focus, many of these lessons are transferable.

The post-Cold War era has wrought enormous new challenges for both consensus and conflict movements. In the Horn of Africa, failing and failed states have ceded responsibility for public welfare, increasing the burden and challenges for both the international community and grassroots organizations. In Latin America and in southern Africa, civil wars and systematic political repression are slowly giving way to a resurgence of democratic activity. Still, wary leaders and fragile institutions can revert to violence, and carefully strategized citizen action will be necessary to protect rights and prevent the abuse of power, to provide social and economic support, and to strengthen the rule of law. Likewise, in Eastern Europe, nascent grassroots movements have begun to sprout out of the rubble of communism. In all of these areas, both consensus movements and conflict movements will likely play significant roles in determining the type of future that is created.

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