Social change in The Australian's media representation of corporate news reporting on two environmental organizations (Greenpeace & Landcare) in the millennium

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Abstract

Landcare and Greenpeace are two organisations synonymous with the environmental movement, although each holds different ideological and strategic positions regarding politics, tactical approaches and organisational structure. Despite their nuances, Landcare and Greenpeace hold comparable membership numbers in Australia, with close to 130,000 members each (Greenpeace, 2006; Landcare, 2003) and are widely recognised by the Australian public. According to Brulle (1996), an historical approach to examining the actions of environmental organisations best elucidates organisational differences and processes of change. This paper draws upon critical theory to explain and analyse how two environmental organisations, through their activities, are portrayed as agents of social change in contemporary mass media outlets. Following Webb and Cary's (2005) identification of the need for research into natural resource management and Landcare to incorporate qualitative methodologies, an in-depth qualitative analysis of 33 of the 424 corporate and environmental news articles published in *The Australian* between 2000 and 2005 is presented. How collective action and issue identification vary by organisation is prioritised, along with critical reflection on media as an institution actively managing communicative authority, shaping ideology and creating social change. By highlighting the political ideology media representation of environmental action displays, this research establishes parameters for reframing existing arguments about the representation of environmental organisations in contemporary Australia.

Keywords: environment; Greenpeace; Landcare; media; social change

Introduction

Informed by the works of media analyst James Curran and social theorist Jurgen Habermas, this paper offers a qualitative, sociological analysis of corporate and environmental articles in the national newspaper, *The Australian*, between 2000-2005. Couching news production as an active, constructive process whereby organizations are given/denied agency via representation, we identify the major issues *The Australian* determined as news-worthy in this period. Next, we focus on two prominent themes which traverse the boundaries of two well-known environmental organizations -

Greenpeace and Landcare1[1]. We reveal several manifestations of social change and instances of hegemonic authority exerted by the media. Overall, our analysis makes an argument that, based upon media representation of specific environmental issues, environmental news and issue reporting in relation to Greenpeace and Landcare in contemporary Australian society is part of the political machinery, complete with identifiable biases and ideological sympathies.

Media as a Hegemonic Social Institution

The media is one of multiple inter-dependent social organizations. Similar to the institutions of science and education, the media both produces and reproduces knowledge(s). Socially embedded within broader society, news media receive "the facts" of their stories from those with a social position and status to affect the production of news. "Specific powerful institutions, frequently accessed (with neglect of other sections of the population, and other organizations), provide the newspapers with most of the discourse which already encode the attitudes of a powerful elite." (Fowler, 1991, p.23).

Although mass communication has been fundamentally reconstituted in our Age of Technology, the phenomenon whereby it exerts far-reaching control over the social structure of societies is, according to historical comparative research, hardly new. Anthropological research reveals the media has played an active role in constructing national identity for decades (Anderson, 1983). Looking specifically at the influence of national British newspapers, research shows the BBC's crucial role in popularizing the empirical monarchy between 1850-1939 (Cardiff and Scannell, 1987). Media analyses in communications foregrounding sociological variables such as class, gender and subculture reveals although "sectional cultures and identities" challenged simplistic ideas about national culture by the 1940s as "the majority came to consume some of the same media, regardless of where they lived and what social grouping they belonged to" (Curran, 2002, p.29). Consequently, in Britain, media analysts lend causality to the role of the media in democratising social experiences. "National media consumption created a framework of shared national experience and common talking points" (Curran, 2002, p.29).

The power of mass media to represent hegemonic norms historically has been likened to its institutionalised social and communicative power. The proliferation of "media studies" research by the Glasgow University Media Group in the late Seventies and Eighties was among the first to reveal the subjectivity of news reporting due to socio-political and socio-economic status (Cohen and Young, 1973). Since then, as multiple disciplines within social science and cultural studies apply a range of social theory to media analysis, the age-old problem vexing sociological theory of the tautological relationship between social structure and individual agency continues to be replicated. For example, discussing the social construction of news, Fowler (1991, p.10) articulates how "what is being claimed about news can equally be claimed about *any* representational discourse. Anything that is said or written about the world is articulated from a particular ideological position." While acknowledgment of post-modern relativity led Fowler to linguistic analysis, we aim to incorporate the insights discourse analysis offers news media analysis yet remain macro in approach.

Whereas some media historians, for instance those explaining how the rise of modernity witnessed a decline in face-to-face communicative interaction coupled with

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1 "Landcare" is used as a general term for the community Landcare movement and Government led Landcare programs. By comparison, "landcare" will be used in specific instances to refer to landcare principles or practices.

an increase in communication mediated by consumerism, corporatism and management (Curran, 1986, p.227-28), apply the social theory of Habermas to explain the relationship between social structure and social interaction, we question whether the theories a Habermasian analysis offers are equally suitable to analysis at the organisational level.

The degree to which the media creates or reflects reality remains undecided, and beyond the scope of our research. By prioritizing qualitative analysis, we actively seek to subordinate and avoid determining issues of causality in lieu of critically analysing how news media coverage impacts organizational representation. In contrast with sociological research prioritizing documenting interlocking directorates and social networks (Castells,1996), levels of social capital (Putnam, 2002) or reformulating classic Marxism to avoid privileging economic determinants of socio-cultural change (Hall, 1982) while still exploring the media as perpetrator of socioeconomic capital's ideological agendas, our research uses a post-structuralist, neo-Gramscian lens to explore the role socio-political ideology plays within Australian media representation of environmental organisations.

Socio-political structure and the media

Representation and creation of media articles/reporting about environmental organizations are arguably political activities. Social movement research reveals the frequency and quantity of media coverage, subject content, attention and degree of favourability/sympathy by journalists and agenda-setters are all factors that determine change in public opinion of environmental movements (Pickvance, 1997). For example, media (press, TV and radio) coverage of environmental issues in Russia reached unprecedentedly high levels due to general interest, as well as the reduction of censorship towards the end of Gorbachev's governance (Pickvance, 1997). However, under the leadership of Yeltsin, media response to an undemocratic political environment resulted in near elimination of environmental coverage as state ownership of media meant "reporting about them [environmental movements] became risky and journalists avoided the subject" (Pickvance, 1997, p.46).

Sociology of the media & environmental organizations in Australia

Few international sociological studies, and no Australian studies, have analyzed how news media represent Greenpeace and/or Landcare in contemporary society (post-1990) to the mass public. Moreover, no prior research co-explores these environmental organizations. In the next section, we review the limited literature for each of these organizations.

a.   Greenpeace

Focusing specifically on Greenpeace and the media, international sociological research is largely divided in approach. Case studies in Canada (Carroll and Ratner, 1999) and Russia/Hungary (Pickvance, 1997) reveal instances where Greenpeace is identified as a social movement organization (SMO) who actively manages and "copes" with how the media portrays (blocks, distorts or facilitates) their ideas and actions. This analytical framework is consistent with environmental studies in the UK which ask how Greenpeace, as a nongovernmental organization (NGO), works to counter the growing public sentiment of detachment and helplessness experienced as a result of the media's high profiling of environmental problems (Rose, 1993). Similarly, a study of

Greenpeace's prominence in the British media tracked the rise and fall in news coverage of the environmental groups "claims making" to explore whether news coverage correlates with the movement's success (Hansen, 1993). More recently, research exploring the symbiotic relationship between Greenpeace and the media has come from management and business, such as US research asking how the organization decided to resist or give in to moral pressure and ethical dilemmas surrounding disposal of the Brent Spar oil rig (Bowie and Dunfee, 2002) in the 1995 *Greenpeace vs Shell* case.

Whereas each of these studies prioritize Greenpeace as its focal point, in contrast, communication and media studies research in the UK offers a dualistic approach by simultaneously examining how the media functions as an institution communicating risk, as well as exploring how Greenpeace used the media to communicate risk (Vian, 2005). Although Vian (2005, p. 679) employed a qualitative case study method to "expose" the complexity of communication strategies involved between Greenpeace and the media, the study was limited to questioning the "usefulness of the Social Amplification of Risk Framework (SARF) in understanding the media's role in risk communication".

We argue these prior analyses of Greenpeace remain limited for at least two reasons. First, as a social institution, the media not only reports (either independently or in conjunction with Greenpeace) environmental knowledge, but moreover it is an actor which arguably constructs knowledge in the first place. As such, the media's role as creator/shaper of environmental knowledge requires prioritization. Second, the influence of socio-political variables and cultural imperatives, such as location, historical time, etc., require theoretical contextualization. Our research aims to acknowledge and work with such influences by applying a grounded theoretical approach rather than advancing any theoretical agenda *prima facie*. In accordance with qualitative research methodology, the theories used in the literature have informed our analysis and provided an initial theoretical framework from which to draw.

b.   Landcare

In contrast with Greenpeace, the relationship between Landcare and the mass media has not been targeted for specific investigation through academic scholarship, so this presents a gap in the literature. However, despite apparent lack of academic interest, from an organizational perspective, Landcare has actively monitored its coverage in the media. Such comparisons between organizations are notable because, like the organisational strategies employed by Greenpeace, whereby part of its plan of action involves strategic involvement in the creation of news, the important role media outlets play in diffusing the landcare message are also recognised by Landcare Australia Limited (LAL). For example, a report commissioned by LAL found during the 2004-2005 financial year, media coverage of Landcare management agenda issues had an equivalent advertising value of more than $24.8 million (LAL, 2006). Such extensive coverage has no doubt contributed to eighty-four per cent of surveyed Australians recognising the LAL "caring hands" logo (LAL, 2006).

The results presented in the LAL media impact report reflect the observation made by Lockie (1999) that landcare has significant symbolic value, which businesses, farmers and government agencies can draw upon to enhance their green credentials. Corporate enterprises, in particular, have been able to "purchase" their association with LAL, even when the environmental practices of past sponsors such as agricultural chemicals manufacturer Monsanto have been highly questionable (Lockie, 1999). Vanclay (1994) and Lockie and Vanclay (1994) even noted the 1994 National Landcare Conference had been carefully managed to silence voices of dissent. For example,

Vanclay (1994) notes comments from current Greens Senator Bob Brown were edited from a recorded session at the conference to protect the interests of a LAL corporate sponsor. Similarly, yet under a different investigation, Lyons (1999) highlighted a partnership between LAL and Uncle Tobys, a cereal manufacturer that employed Landcare logos and messages in television and print media outlets to help market "Organic Vita Brits". By coupling an organic product with an association of Landcare, Uncle Tobys utilised two signifiers that appealed to green consumers (Lyons, 1999). However, when production of "Organic Vita Brits" ceased in 1996 due to rising commodity prices, Uncle Tobys retained the LAL partnership, adjusting product packaging to feature Coastcare logo rather than Landcare symbols (Lyons, 1999). Lyons (1999) notes Coastcare is associated with urban and coastal areas, which promotes an image more consistent with other Uncle Tobys products. Furthermore, the switch also suggests the concentration of Australian residents in urban centres might influence the identification and comprehension of environmental problems in Australia (Lyons, 1999).

Methodology and Findings

Methodology

Content (Ezzy, 2002) and discourse analysis (Fowler, 1991) are two principal methodologies employed within the social sciences to analyse secondary data. In this research, we take an empirical approach to the organization of our sample and use interpretive methodologies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) to qualitatively provide rich description of social phenomena. Our research questions the value-neutrality of "objective" news reporting, arguing both the coverage and representation of issues is a political activity equipped with a host of social norms, power struggles and competing ideologies. To identify latent themes in news articles, we adopt Fowler's view that the formation of news events and values is "a reciprocal, dialectical process in which stereotypes are the currency of negotiation" (1991, p.18).

According to the database, *Factiva, The Australian* published 78 corporate/industrial and environmental news articles containing the keyword "Landcare" and 346 containing the keyword "Greenpeace" between 2000 and 2005. Dividing the sample by news location and organisation, 67 (Landcare) and 245 (Greenpeace) appear as "environmental news" and 24 (Landcare) and 160 (Greenpeace) appear as "corporate/industrial news". Simply examining the sample, one notices the degree of variation in media coverage between these two environmental organizations.

Qualitative thematic analysis enabled us to identify three primary themes (1. government collaboration 2. shifting values and practice 3. economic imperatives) for Landcare and eight for Greenpeace (1. shale oil 2. climate change/nuclear energy 3. genetic modification 4. logging and timber 5. fishing and whaling 6. activism and organizational issues 7. other industries 8. advertising and corporatism). For this paper, our analysis prioritizes organizational comparison and social change. Therefore, we focus on two sociological concepts – a) social trust and b) normative social authority to permit inter-organizational comparison and transcend focus on organizationally contingent themes. Findings from in-depth analysis of 20 Greenpeace and 13 Landcare new articles are reported.

Findings

Greenpeace is arguably a different organization in the new millennium, than it was when founded in 1971. The transpiring social change is well expressed by the following scenario published in *The Australian* environmental news in 2001:

> It is early on an icy Melbourne morning when a seemingly homogenous bunch of financial "suits" huddle over croissants and coffee in the Collins Street boardroom… there is nothing extraordinary in that, except for the fact that the guest speakers they have come to hear are both from the financial world's former archenemy multinational, Greenpeace… dressed in suits, and with the clipped idiom of the financial world point perfect… neither Greenpeace… or its visiting international political director on climate change Bill Hare have any intention on appealing to this crowd's moral and environmental obligations. This spiel is pure finance (Hodge, 4 June 2001).

This reflects not only organizational change, within Greenpeace and the financial sector, but moreover reflects a broader societal change in concern for environmental issues and attitudes towards landcare management. "The fact that Greenpeace can actually draw a decent Friday morning financial crowd, and then take the whole show on the road to Sydney next week, is an indication of just how far both sides have moved in recent times" (Hodge, 4 June 2001). As Greenpeace develops more sophisticated mobilization and social movement tactics, and as corporations consider the fiscal and social advantages that accompany creating public images of corporate responsibility, we are witnessing a change in socio-political allegiances.

This change is also reflected through corporate involvement with landcare. For example, the esteem with which landcare is held within Australian communities and the impact its teachings have had upon corporate social consciences is evidenced by Boral Boss Rob Pearse pointing to landcare "p-practice" as a means of demonstrating cohesiveness within local communities:

> Nobody wants a quarry plant or concrete factory next door. So we have to listen to the community and know what their local concerns are. We work hard at being accepted by the community by making a contribution to tree planting and landcare (Ooi, 12 July 2004).

Outside the financial centres and in rural regions, the social change elicited by Landcare's involvement is equally pronounced:

> Farmers have demonstrated their willingness to embrace change through Landcare, a cultural shift of enormous magnitude. Remember when if something moved farmers shot it, if it didn't they cut it down? These days they plant trees and talk about biodiversity (Wahlquist, 26 February 2001).

Environmental issues have contributed to both organisational and cultural change in community and corporate environments.

Organizational representation and the politics of authority

In discussing the issue of foreign ownership and control of Australian media, Greenpeace's authority as a defender of social truth and representative of the collective good is conveyed when Devine (9 October 2000) describes how "independence of government is demonstrated by…preference…of big business…heeding Greenpeace over BHP." Similarly, McIntyre (23 May 2002) confers status and authority, in a Weberian sense, to Greenpeace by publicizing his grievances about how public affairs professionals should "handle the rising political and regulatory power base of the sometimes feral non-government organizations such as Amnesty

International, Greenpeace and the World Wildlife Fund." If the value-laden term "feral" does not adequately convey his message of disdain, McIntyre's quote from an international public affairs representative clearly highlights the growing power, and accompanying disgruntlement, NGOs are causing more traditional stakeholders of dominant Western values and authority:

> There is simply not a great deal known about the best-known NGOs. The whole sector is not so much a movement, but an industry continually trying to drum up work for itself and it continually needs issues. There is no governance for the NGOs themselves, there is minimal transparency, it is proud to radicalization and extremism, and even the best NGOs have hidden linkages to the ratbags" (McIntyre citing D'Cruz, 23 May 2002).

Four months later, reporting on the Johannesburg talks, Blair publishes a scathing polemic of Greenpeace, complete with such stereotypes as:

> that's Greenpeace for you; if you've got a pulse, you can go to hell…diversion, exaggeration and hysteria are signs that the greens realize that they're losing [and]…another Greenpeace mouth described Australia and Canada as 'America's poodles'. Remember those words the next time a Greenpeace functionary appears at your door asking for donations (Blair, 5 September 2002).

Journalists' common practice of equating Greenpeace with the political party, The Greens, as a means to discredit both, is a practice Greenpeace calls the media on in at least one occasion. In response to columnist Frank Devine's work, *The Australian* publishes the following letter where Humphrey Hollins notes:

> His comparison of the relationship between Greenpeace and the Greens with that between the IRA and Sinn Fein is ill-informed and malicious. There are no organizational or financial connections whatsoever between the Greens and Greenpeace. Greenpeace is not, has never been, nor ever will be, any kind of wing in the Greens (Hollins, 21 November 2001).

Media criticism of Greenpeace and other NGOs stands in sharp contrast with what it reports as Australian public opinion. In 2002, Greenpeace is listed as one of "the big hitters of community-based lobbying - Greenpeace, Amnesty International and Oxfam" (Buckell, 11 December 2002). In contrast with corporate actors, Australians give environmental organizations far greater legitimacy and social trust:

> when asked to rate which groups Australians "trust to do the right thing", Amnesty International, Greenpeace, the Australian conservation foundation and World Wildlife Fund take the top four spots, streets ahead of corporate brands such [as] Microsoft, Nike, and Ford. In general terms, 53% of Australian say they trust NGOs to do the right thing versus 18% for media, 30% for government and 38% for business (McIntyre, 23 May 2002).

The so-called greater trust "Australians" give environmental organizations, however, is an issue not as black and white as the paper on which *The Australian* is written. One of the more prominent themes in news coverage of Greenpeace is the energy debate. Writing over forty news articles between 2000-2005 mentioning Greenpeace in relation to the debate, journalist Nigel Wilson, the "energy writer" consistently reinforces Greenpeace as "the" single organization countering the oil industry and the Australian government. For example, summarizing several years of battle, Wilson writes:

> Southern Pacific petroleum had promoted the Stuart project for three decades and it had been provided with a raft of government assistance packages, including excise relief and research and development grants, as well as funds to offset the $11 million cost of a new wharf in Gladstone Harbor… but the pilot plan never performed to its planned output targets and became the focus of an intensive

Greenpeace campaign to have it shut down because of environmental concerns (4 March 2005).

Consistent inclusion of Greenpeace as the "representative" for expert opinion legitimates the organization's role and grants authority. Even where Wilson's articles waver between more "objective" descriptions versus stereotyping Greenpeace's actions, it is rarely clear where the press condones or condemns the organization. For example, reporting on political response to a white paper on energy policy, Wilson writes, "Unsurprisingly, Greenpeace went on the attack, saying the Howard statement would increase the nation's dependence on fossil fuels, to the detriment of all Australians" (16 June 2004). Although stereotypical, this statement is not necessarily negative or detrimental to either the environmental movement or Greenpeace's institutionalized aims. For instance, Greenpeace might well condone media representation acknowledging its "watchdog" role of the Australian government and environmental policy.

Sociological analysis of *The Australians*' representation of Greenpeace in its news articles discloses the extent to which Greenpeace is granted an "expert" role with authority to speak on a host of environmental issues to inform the public. However, despite media legitimation as an expert for specifically identifiable topics, the institutional relationship between Greenpeace and the Australian government remains contentious. For example, in several instances, the government is reported as working in unison with Greenpeace, despite the media's continuous characterization of Greenpeace as "radical": "The Howard Government has declared its support for radical environmental group Greenpeace by pledging a ban on the import of illegally obtained forest products." (16 November 2004). Conversely, where appropriate, the government uses Greenpeace to achieve its own objectives. For example, "an oil company was offered $36 million in government subsidies on the condition it took legal action against the environmental group Greenpeace" (Coleman, 4 October 2004). Perhaps because the green energy statement, like other environmental initiatives, means "John Howard…. faces the almost impossible task of trying to please two groups with opposing aims" (Coleman, 15 June 2004).

The relationship between Greenpeace and the government is demonstrably antagonistic. For instance, in commenting on the negative impact commercial fishing industry and fisheries have on migratory fish species, a Greenpeace oceans' spokesperson is quoted stating:

> we're seeing a situation where fishing is allowed to continue with only weak or unsatisfactory management changes," and then paraphrases Greenpeace as saying "the audit highlighted the federal government's failure to back up its rhetoric [and]… although all Australian fisheries were regularly assessed, the government was not taking sufficient action to correct unsustainable practices (Hodge, 5 September 2003).

Discussing Australia's failure to ratify the Kyoto protocol, the media quotes another Greenpeace representative saying John Howard's comments "once again showed a total disregard for clever protection and the environment" (Hodge, 6 June 2002).

Similarly, the Government highlights when Greenpeace has engaged in unacceptable behaviour violating social norms. When "the matter" of Greenpeace activists hanging a boom across a path in the Sydney Harbour in 2003 "was referred to Mr. Williams [Attorney General Daryl Williams] after Sydney radio host Alan Jones raised it during an interview with John Howard", the media took an active role in promoting antagonism between Greenpeace and the government. The radio reporter, Jones, advises John Howard "the intention to commit sabotage and possession of articles to commit sabotage which Greenpeace obviously possesses, is crime punishable by imprisonment for 15 years" (Kerin, 15 April 2003). *The Australian*, deciding the radio

interview newsworthy, quotes Jones deduction that Greenpeace's activities are "treason" and his probing Howard for agreement. The curious relationship between Greenpeace and the Australian government is highlighted when Mr. Howard does not take the bait to comment negatively on the activists but rather tells the media "well, I can see that you have a very valid question" (Kerin, 15 April 2003).

In contrast to Greenpeace, Landcare is a government-led initiative. Yet, this has not made the relationship between Landcare stakeholders and the Government any less peculiar. This is reflected when eminent Australian Conservation Foundation and National Farmers Federation (NFF) luminaries Rick Farley and Philip Toyne note how Landcare enabled community capacity building:

> An unexpected spin-off from the formation of Landcare groups has been the creation of a new political force in the bush. Some landholders have been able to harness their new organisation to tackle many issues other than land and water degradation, such as declining services in regional Australia (Farley & Toyne, 27 July 2000).

A farmer expressed a similar sentiment, saying:

> I think it is the best thing that has happened for a long time…What I really think the Landcare movement has done is brought a lot of communities together and started to show them ways of empowering themselves and fighting for what they want" (Wahlquist, 23 May 2001).

The Australian reveals this "fight" is most usually taken up with governing authorities who supply financial support necessary for the fulfilment of farmer's "wants". Tension between community needs and government response is reportedly recognised by the general manager of natural resources in the Murray-Darling Basin Commission, who claimed of a new catchment management plan

> We know it is well-planned. We know the catchment management authorities and the Landcare groups that produced those plans will commit their resources if those plans go ahead. It remains to be seen whether the governments and everybody else can afford to do that (Wahlquist 18 March 2000).

Unlike Greenpeace, Landcare news exhibit different degrees of social trust and legitimation in the media. Landcare rarely appears in corporate/industry or environmental news, and when it does, news coverage tends to be brief and exhibits negativity. For example, a rural Landcare officer working to attract support from local business for landcare projects acknowledges governmental dependence:

> private funding won't be enough for us to continue to do our work here, and I think it would be a mistake for governments to stop funding a program that already has, and will continue to make a difference to the way communities treat their local land and water issue (Lunn, 28 February 2000).

Despite their differences, both Greenpeace and Landcare tend to agree that the Australian government's commitment to the environment is inadequate. Landcare's caution above, that government must continue supporting it, is reflected by former National Farmers Federation (NFF) president Donald McGauchie:

> [Landcare] marries environmental sustainability with economic profitability, because in Australian agriculture you simply cannot have one without the other and have a long-term future…[the report] carries some strong warnings for governments to continue to support the Landcare movement". But he acknowledged there was strong support, especially from the Prime Minister. "The commitment of government to the environment is growing. We just have to make sure we direct it right. (Wahlquist, 23 August 2003).

This demonstrates three key points. First, Landcare groups have an obvious dependence upon government funding as a precursor to continued action and continued social change. Second, Landcare participants exhibit conscious reflexivity by recognising the position of both themselves and the Government within the Landcare program. Third, news reporting demonstrates stakeholders are sufficiently secure to caution Government against reducing funding that would threaten access to the rewards gained through Landcare participation. From a Habermasian perspective, whereby government's role is to respond to market failure and ensure distribution of material rewards provided by capitalistism, the threats put forth in *The Australian* suggest the presence of collective knowledge sufficient to mobilise activism and form the basis of a political legitimation crisis.

Ideology and the creation of knowledge

According to Habermas (1975, p.21), the "depoliticization of the class relationship" accompanies liberal capitalism. So far, we have argued, as represented by the news media, during 2000-2005, Greenpeace is routinely granted more communicative authority and legitimation than Landcare. At an organizational level, Greenpeace and Landcare differ ideologically. Greenpeace's activities reported in *The Australian* reflect an increasing awareness of, and response to, realities of modern day social classes operating in a globalised, multinational world. Far from being exiled to the social fringe, former leaders and campaigners today move into mainstream occupations, such as environmental consulting to "big business" (Trounson, 9 December 2005), as it's agendas and actions routinely receive news coverage in mainstream, national Australian newspapers.

Our qualitative analysis reveals a shift over time in Greenpeace issues receiving what we describe as either "neutral" or "biased" coverage in *The Australian*.
Key deciding factors include: the social desirability of the issue and the status, in the eyes of the media reporter, of the stakeholders involved. The following examples demonstrate the complexity of articulating a clearly defined model of social change in news coverage of environmental organizations.

In 2005, journalist Greg Roberts' report on the federal government's initiative to "crackdown on illegal logging or face tight restrictions on timber exports" reveals ideological consistency, albeit different urgency, between political leaders and Greenpeace campaigners. In contrast with politicians of bygone years, Senator Ian McDonald argues "We have to stop the slaughter of rainforests in some of these countries. This illegal trade is a threat to some of the world's most unique and rare forests." (19 December 2005). Such a position is ideologically consistent with rhetoric espoused by environmental organizations which is an historically-contingent phenomenon. In contemporary society, news media portray the boundary between governance and environmental activism as increasingly blurred. The sentiments of one Greenpeace campaigner express the relationship well "The Coalition promised before the October election last year to ban illegal log imports in a bid to woo the Green vote" (Roberts, 19 December 2005).

The symbiotic relationship between politicians and environmental organisations is notable in the feature article *Costly Harvest of Ignorant GM Campaign* by Jennifer Marohasy, environmental director at the Institute of Public Affairs. According to Marohasy, "Australian agriculture is missing out on cheap and green crops" due to growing demand for organic food "driven by increasing consumer resistance to genetically modified (GM) foods" (9 December 2005). Citing resistance to GM foods as "driven by anti-GM campaigning", Marohasy identifies state government bans on

planting GM corn, soybeans and canola in Australia and "a Greenpeace anti-GM campaign [that] deceptively targeted GM canola...[which] led to the state bans on GM food crops" (9 December 2005). Through judgmental tone, Marohasy implies Greenpeace's anti-GM campaign was sufficiently powerful to shape Australia's national agenda, which, in her opinion, took a turn in the wrong direction. Writing, "Incredibly, in Australia we have banned GM varieties that could help us reduce our ecological footprint, through the use of more environmentally friendly herbicides in the case of soybeans and canola" (9 December 2005) undermines Greenpeace's role as an expert in environmental knowledge. Concurrently, highlighting how "ironically, while the Victorian Government has banned GM food crops, Victorian farmers import large quantities of GM soybeans from the US to feed their dairy cows" (Marohasy, 9 December 2005.

Stating, "misinformation from anti-GM campaigning comes at a significant economic and environmental cost. Benbrook [an anti-GM advocate and US-based consultant] and the organic food industry may unintentionally be playing an expensive game with Australian agriculture" (9 December 2005) implies cohesion of opinion in Australian agriculture and naivety in knowledge and intent among anti-GM campaigners, among which Greenpeace is listed.

Although this research finds convergence between Australian political agendas and environmental initiatives in some arenas, the two social institutions tend to remain polarised. Even when politicians and environmental campaigners may theoretically agree about an environmental issue, their social framework and institutional demands appear to prioritize antagonism over cooperation. For example, when the Australian Federal Forestry Minister advocated an anti-logging strategy, the media uses the quote from the Greenpeace forestry campaigner, Katarina Lecchi, "they should not waste any more time" (19 December 2005), to show dissent. Likewise, by reporting how "Senator Macdonald said conservationists needed to appreciate that through their efforts, Australian hardwood sources had largely been locked away in reserves such as the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area" (19 December 2005), *The Australian* portrays Greenpeace as unappreciative of the government's actions. Thus, on one hand, the media upholds Greenpeace as an expert, with right to speak authoritatively on environmental topics, while simultaneously using other institutions to create an image of Greenpeace as too demanding and radicalised to constitute valid, alternative approaches which may be adoptable by the mainstream majority.

While the effect of quotes the media selects to print from Greenpeace representatives is debatable, in sharp contrast is news coverage of Landcare. Neither Landcare Australia, nor government agencies, are frequently called upon to provide expert opinion on Landcare issues. This is not to suggest ideological values to not exist. *The Australian* shows Landcare as ensconced within an ideological dialectic. Landcare has "resulted in a cultural change in attitude among farming communities, towards looking after the environment" (Henry & Donges, 26 February 2001). The suggestion that Landcare has displaced a culture of destruction and enabled a conservation movement is further evidenced by McGregor (15 January 2001), where a volunteer reports his "Landcare group now includes cane farmers whose predecessors originally cleared the rainforests." This generational change, driven by Landcare's creation of environmental awareness, is documented by Thomson (8 February 2001):

> It is important to note that in recent times there has been an enormous desire from the community to rectify some of the decisions of the past and this is reflected…in initiatives such as Landcare.

Whilst these articles demonstrate an almost spiritual symbolism in landcare action, a more critical view reveals such change has been driven by economic imperative as much as a desire to "do the right thing." Drawing on Marcuse (1968), one can

recognise an ideological adherence to capitalist principles as responsible for generating support for the Landcare movement. The critical view of technological rationalism and mass market capitalism, as a response to humanity's perpetual struggle with nature, is exacerbated by the geography of most landcare activity in rural regions of a harsh Australian environment. As reported, "Professor Cullen said the drought had proven the value of Landcare farming" because

> It is these Landcare farming systems that have come through the drought, without having their hands held out, without getting into distress and without causing degradation." He said farmers were adopting more sustainable practices and realising they could make a real profit from them. "They are coming out of the innovation stage and into mainstream thinking (Wahlquist 6 November 2003).

The dual purpose served by Landcare partnerships are also apparent in the corporate arena. Brand manager of Banrock Station wine makes the market advantage of association with environmental organisations transparent:

> Banrock Station wine is a good-quality product at an affordable price but it has that competitive edge of its environmental association. Every time we sell a bottle of Banrock Station wine, a donation goes back to the relevant landcare or wetland care organisation. To date we have donated $750,000 to landcare and wetland care restoration projects around the world, including $330,000 in Australia (Wahlquist 19 April 2001).

Moreover, in a rare instance where the media gives Landcare direct communicative authority, Brian Scarsbrick is sourced to comment on the market success created by corporate environmentalism. According to Scarsbrick, not only did association with an environmental organisation have benefits for the corporate organisation,

> One survey showed 71 per cent of consumers would switch wine labels when profits were redirected to enhancing the environment…It does work. People are concerned about the environment. "They're too busy to plant a tree - so they buy a product, and it relieves their anxiety because they think it's doing something for the environment (Brechin, 3 February 2001).

Conclusions

This research implicitly shows Greenpeace and Landcare differ in their approaches to effecting social change. Explicitly, it demonstrates variation in media representation, and accompanying social perceptions, since the organizations inception. By simultaneously analyzing environmental issues raised in mainstream news articles, while theorizing the media as an institution with the power to create social norms and hegemonic knowledge, our research illustrates how the media advances and thwarts two environmental organizations' aims.

Returning to Curran, we may use the historical comparison of the similarity in integrative function, as institutions of social control, both the church and media perform for final guidance.

> "Like the medieval Church, the media link together different groups and provided a shared experience that promoted social solidarity. The media also emphasized collective values which bound people closer together, in a way that was comparable to the influence of the medieval Church. The commonality of the Christian faith was replaced by the commonality of consumerism, feted in consumer advertising, and of nationalism affirmed by ritualized national media events. Indeed, the two institutions engaged in very similar ideological 'work', despite the difference of time that separated them… the modern media assumed

the role of the church, in a more secular age, of interpreting and making sense of the world to the mass public. Like their priestly predecessors, professional communicators amplify systems of representation that legitimated the social system. (Curran, 2002, p.77)

The Australian, as "professional communicators" create "systems of representation(s)" via the production of news and knowledge. Subsequently, dominant values and ideologies of social systems are reproduced. By representing Greenpeace as an organizational "expert" on a host of environmental topics, by granting it communicative legitimacy to speak on its own behalf through direct quotes from constituents and by allocating it considerable news coverage in the first place, as evidenced through the quantity of articles, *The Australian* "make[s] sense of the world [of environmental politics] to the mass public" in sociologically identifiable ways. In contrast, via minimal and largely critical news coverage, lack of interviews with organizational spokespersons, and non-existence of consultation as an authoritative agent, Landcare is denied equal communicative legitimacy.

Like Fowler's analysis, revealing "how language is impregnated with ideology," and how newspapers' reproduction of discourse reflects elitist attitudes and values inherently due to the industry's position in "an industrial-capitalist society, with an authoritarian, conservative government, and appropriate ideological and repressive agencies" (1991, p.24), *The Australian* news analysed here reflects the social values the media and Australians hold to be consistent with the advanced capitalistic social order.

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