

ROUNDTABLE
ON SCIENCE & PUBLIC POLICY

**Civic Environmentalism:
Developing a Research
Agenda**

By Marc Landy & Charles Rubin

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Washington, D.C.

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Marc Landy and Charles Rubin
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Summary

Environmental policymaking too often is driven by a mistaken focus on big culprit, big ticket, and big government solutions. Many of our most persistent environmental problems are local in nature and cause. A new way of thinking about protecting nature is needed to deal with these kinds of environmental challenges. Civic environmentalism abandons large-scale, command-and-control politics for workable local efforts. It recognizes that “the environment” is not a special realm reserved for experts and professional activists, but an essential aspect of public life – a place for citizens.

This is especially important as we enter today's new, more local phase in environmental policy, from non-point pollution control to regional ecosystem issues. The federal government cannot control these activities alone. Building effective solutions requires the work of communities and networks of communities in true partnership with national action. After outlining the implications of civic environmentalism for public policy, Professors Landy and Rubin led a discussion to identify issue areas for further examination to assess the broad applicability of civic environmentalism.

Dr. Landy's Remarks

I am going to go first and give you an overview of what we mean by civic environmentalism and try to give you a sense of why it's something that is both relevant and useful for policymakers in Washington to think more about. I have to begin by acknowledging the complexity of this audience, because we have amongst us people who probably know more about civic environmentalism than I do. Some of the most eminent environmental thinkers and officials in the country are sprinkled amongst you, and yet on the other hand I think there may be some people who are here for whom the term civic environmentalism is new. So I will beg the indulgence

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of my more senior colleagues in the room and try to say some very basic things, to introduce a new way of thinking about environmental policy.

We think civic environmentalism is capable of breaking some of the logjams of the ideological histrionics that go on over this issue, and can make the issue relevant for the broad mass of the American public, who think of themselves as environmentalists. That term is sometimes co-opted by an element of our community when it in fact is a term that has meaning very, very broadly for all of us who like to spend time outdoors. In that vein, I want to say that one of the things that most distinguishes our view of environmentalism is that we think it's people-friendly. We think that people are part of the environment and on the whole, a positive part of the environment. We very much want to disabuse the notion that environmentalism is misanthropic. There are great misanthropes in the history of environmental thinking, John Muir and others who really didn't like people very much. I can respect that, but it seems to me that in our democracy, as we think about making policy for our fellow citizens, it's good to start from a perspective of enjoying and liking other people and not always trying to get them out of the way.

The term environmentalism is the more obvious of the two terms we use. By environment we mean the same thing as everyone else: the air, the water, the land, other species, habitat, and the like; that's our focus of concern. Perhaps what is a little less immediately comprehensible is why we want to attach the word "civic." We do that mainly because we believe that as important as it is to make good environmental policy and come to intelligent decisions, it is even more important to create good citizens, that policy affects the character of the citizen as much as the character of the citizen affects policy. So we are very concerned to bring environmentalism into the broad rubric of policies that ordinary people have to deal with in their normal lives as citizens. People are used to thinking about education, they are used to thinking about crime, they are used to thinking about the quality of their roads, but often they are used to somehow delegating their concern about environment either to experts or to public television or to somebody, but it's not their personal concern.

Our essential message, the message of civic environmentalism, is that the environment is *us*. It is our problem, it is our duty to take the lion's share of responsibility for dealing with it, which in the American context, a context of federalism, means that we deal with this problem the way we deal with most problems of immediate and direct concern to ourselves: at the local level. We want all of us not only to act locally but to think lo-

cally. It's all right to think locally. In that sense, our view of environment has an awful lot to do with other innovations that have been going on across a wide variety of policy issues. That shouldn't be any surprise, because we don't view environment as in any way a unique policy issue to be dealt with in some way that is out of sync with other policies. But think about community policing: the new wave of thinking about crime control has to do with involving the citizenry as basically responsible for preventing crime. Policemen don't prevent crime; citizens prevent crime. I think a lot of the current thinking about community policing and faith-based initiatives has some of the same quality of pushing responsibility for solving social problems down to the level, not just of individuals and families, but of local organizations and various civic groups who have to take some kind of serious ownership of the problems that they face.

This all seems to me to be especially plausible in the current environmental context because many of the problems that are coming to the fore these days, what I would think of as the new wave of environmental issues, are issues that have already in a way fallen through the cracks of the great bureaucratic edifice of environmental control, which has played a very positive role in many respects, but which has almost nothing useful to say about really tricky people-oriented problems like non-point sources of water pollution. Non-point sources – that's a great euphemism for us. We are the non-point sources. We use Scott Turf Builder, we use pesticides and we do all sorts of things, and we move around and that makes us non-point sources, ordinary things that ordinary folks do that create pollution. Then there are the issues surrounding abandoned hazardous waste sites, not the big-ticket ones that get onto the Superfund list, but the ones that make you nervous, such as contaminated sites. We have something called the Brownfields Movement, which is essentially a community-based effort to figure out how to re-use these sites. As for habitat, the notion that we can somehow save endangered species simply by putting bubbles around them is obviously not true, or by relying on the perverse incentives of the Endangered Species Act. I don't think we have saved a lot of species that way. But the idea that communities can begin to think through habitat improvement and protection in their own neighborhoods, in their own areas, as ways to keep habitat that species need, this is an idea for the future. So there is a new wave of problems that are particularly amenable to this notion of thinking locally and acting locally. We are not presuming to solve the problem of global warming this way.

I think it is important to say that there has been some very important re-thinking of the premises of environmental policy that are also very

helpful to our cause. The first one has to do with the nature of risk. When I first got into this issue, we talked about safety all the time. Things were either safe or they were dangerous. Well, all the important work done in the risk-analysis field over the past few decades has disabused us of that idea. With regard to almost any problem that you're going to come across, risk is a relative notion. You can have more of it or you can have less of it. Given that, it seems to me it's very, very sensible across a whole wide variety of policy issues to let local communities choose. There are communities in rural New Mexico where there are high background levels of arsenic and they choose to have a lot of arsenic in their water, rather than build very expensive new treatment plants. There are other communities that wouldn't. In Newton, Massachusetts, no risk is too small for the community to invest in lowering it and that can be Newton's choice. So risk relativity is a profound principle that helps us to believe that it is possible for local communities to differ in the kinds of environmental choices that they choose to make.

Along the same lines, there has been some very important re-thinking of ecological relationships. Again, I can remember a time when what I would call the "metaphor of interconnectedness" dominated all environmental thinking. By this way of thinking, none of us really had the right, on the local level, to make any choices because anything we did here in Point A was eventually going to trickle down and affect what was going on across the globe, across the continent, here, there and everywhere. Well, if that's true, then of course we have no right to make local decisions. But now there seems to be a more robust understanding of environment and ecology which reminds us just how robust local environments can be. It's very much an empirical question as to whether your actions in Point A have these profound, all-encompassing effects, such that you really don't have the right to make decisions about the environment. When I call interconnectedness a metaphor, that doesn't mean it's false. All metaphors are true and all metaphors are false; that's what a metaphor is. So my metaphor of robustness is the same. Is it true, is it false? It's an empirical question.

Risk relativity and the notion that local ecologies can be robust or they can be fragile or they can be totally dependent on what's happening elsewhere are the two great intellectual developments that make it plausible to think civically and locally about the environment and about making environmental decisions. And since we can, we should, because there are enormous advantages to doing so. First of all, only by thinking locally can we at all encompass, in our own selves and in our persons, both the bene-

fits and the costs of various environmental decisions. If I want my lake cleaned up, if I think it's too silted and I want it to be clearer for swimming purposes, I don't exactly understand why somebody far away should pay for that. On the other hand, if there is some abandoned hazardous waste site in my neighborhood and by banding together, my fellow residents and I can create usable real estate that could then be sold at a profit and developed, then it seems to me I am entitled to see some of that profit. So on both the cost and benefit side, there seems to me to be an equity argument as well as an argument in terms of developing personal responsibility for internalizing the costs and benefits, and that means things have to be done locally.

It seems to me that in our form of government, in our great federal republic, we believe in diversity. If we believe in diversity, it seems to me that we also believe that the city of Newton and the city of Dubuque don't have to come to the same conclusion in every environmental protection decision. One of the very great meanings of liberty is the ability to come to different decisions. Let me just mention one other, and that is the notion of local knowledge. Among the terrible problems that you have in an excessively bureaucratic, regulatory regime is that the people who make the decisions don't know. They can't know. They are too far away, they are too inexperienced, and they are relying on a scientific database that is inadequate. That is the nature of environmental science and environmental protection. It is not that local knowledge is a perfect replacement for that; local knowledge has its own defects. But often people on the ground just know a lot more about the environmental circumstances that they face than other people do, even if those other people, like my colleague Dr. Rubin, have fancy degrees. So to be able to localize the local knowledge, to be able to encourage people to exercise their civic muscles and to be able to localize and encourage a feeling of responsibility and civic duty, it seems to me that's an awful lot of good. That is the sort of thing that we could come to if we began to think through more seriously what sorts of environmental decisions could be made under a civic rubric rather than a purely bureaucratic and regulatory one. And with that, I will hand the floor over to my colleague.

Dr. Rubin's Remarks

Jeff thought it might be useful if I spoke to you today about some of the various ways in which the term "civic environmentalism" is used, because if you were to do what I did recently and do a web search on civic environmentalism, you would find a whole host of mentions of it out there. But they wouldn't all be talking about the same thing when they were using

that label. The fact that there is widespread use of the term does seem to indicate that there must be something immensely appealing about linking localities with responsibility. Certainly on the other side, there is increasingly something very unappealing about the rhetoric and at times the reality of a command-and-control regulatory system. But while nearly all of those who talk about civic environmentalism share a sense of the advantages of decentralization, there remain some serious and, to my mind, instructive differences among these various approaches. So today I am going to outline three kinds of civic environmentalism that you will find out there as a way of highlighting what I think to be the distinctive and, not surprisingly, the superior elements of the approach that Marc has outlined for you today.

The first use of the term and chronologically the earliest after Landy's is associated with the work of a fellow named DeWitt John. His account of civic environmentalism examines it from two points of view. On the one hand, John describes civic environmentalism as the way in which state and local officials and professionals already charged with environmental regulatory responsibilities take a greater initiative toward addressing certain next-generation environmental problems, such as the non-point source pollution that Marc already talked about. They do this as a way of preempting or forestalling federal activity in that area. This often happens in the Brownfield area, where the whole point is, "Can we do what we need to do *before* E. P. A. starts paying attention to this site?" On the other hand, John also treats civic environmentalism as a new tool in the arsenal of federal efforts at environmental remediation, a tool that can take advantage of local knowledge and capacities, a tool that stresses carrots of subsidies or funding or information or education over the legal sticks of a command-and-control regime.

There is a tension between these two outlooks, it seems to me, and that tension is nicely illustrated by the fact that whereas John begins his book by describing civic environmentalism as a bottom-up way of making environmental policy, by the end of the book he is calling it a new kind of alliance between national, state and local levels and he explicitly abandons the bottom-up notion. There are various reasons why John changes his mind. Our author has not nodded; he understands that there has been a need for a change in understanding of civic environmentalism. The key points behind that change seem to be, on the one hand, the fact that he ultimately becomes less and less interested in federalism as a legitimating principle for political decentralization. Federalism is just a tactic; you use it to win. On the other hand, there is ultimately a judgment that civic envi-

ronmentalism is important to the extent to which it produces certain specific kinds of outcomes which, it just so happens, he thinks are the right outcomes for it to produce. In other words, civic environmentalism is a good thing to the extent that it can be employed by the national government to produce certain outcomes with greater success than if the national government had used the usual, more centralized means.

Now what John is doing here, it seems to me, is revealing a key issue that is necessary to face in any serious discussion of decentralized environmental decision-making: the willingness to acknowledge and accept that local governments can and will make what some regard as the wrong decision. That is an odd stumbling block, admittedly. Many people accept the fact that the federal government routinely makes decisions that significant numbers of people think are wrong, without for that reason questioning the legitimacy of federal decision making per se. But our democratic attraction to centralization, along with our sense that environmental problems have finite and usually technical solutions, makes it seem that the possibility of these local errors, these decisions that some people regard as mistakes, is a reason to avoid local decisions in the first place. A politically sophisticated view of civic environmentalism has to see that political decisions are always open to review. A colleague of mine once said cynically that political decisions are for rent, not for sale. He meant that as a criticism but actually it seems to be something of a virtue. Political questions can always be raised again, so what some may regard as bad policies are in fact educational opportunities for the further exercise of local civic muscle. Likewise, civic environmentalism ought to acknowledge that if bad decisions are made, there is something to be said for confining them to a more limited scope.

A second use of the term civic environmentalism describes an effort to create participatory planning structures in which local “stakeholders” (that’s the favorite word these days) gather to engage in “visioning processes” designed to achieve “holistic solutions” to environmental problems. Such problems are seen as essentially symptomatic of, or at least linked to, deeper political and social ills. In other words, we have environmental problems because in some very important senses the political system itself is unjust and insufficiently participatory, insufficiently forward thinking. As found in the work of William Shutkin and his followers, this kind of civic environmentalism falls pretty self-consciously in line with the reform agenda of the American New Left since the 1960’s. It’s an effort to create alternative power structures that will favor hitherto-disadvantaged groups and do so within a system that is regarded, again, as unfair in social, political, and

economic terms, a system that is run by just those insiders who, if you will recall, John makes somewhat central to the civic environmental effort. So already here you can get a sense of some of the ferment among those who are all using the same term.

Now it seems to me one might well wonder about the tensions inherent in the phrase “democratic planning.” Certainly planners have come a long way if they are even willing to speak in those terms. Once upon a time, planners understood that planning was in fact not at all democratic and that that was a good thing. One might look more closely therefore at the role of professional planners in fact play in taking the inchoate vision of stakeholders, of all kinds of people around the table who never actually do agree on very much, and turning those exhaustive visioning sessions into implementable plans. There is always a staff, in other words. (I apologize, since I am speaking to a staff.) One might also wonder about what support to decentralization “holism” represents: if everything is connected to everything else, as Marc already highlighted, what support does that actually give to local decision making? Of course as he noted, it doesn’t give *any* support to local decision making. As you see in Shutkin’s book, for example, there is a constant tendency to be pulled toward ever-larger realms of decision-making.

But it seems to me, although one might well wonder about this point, the most problematic aspect of Shutkin’s work is his effort to use stakeholder participatory bodies to do an end-run around representative political institutions. The key questions here are not hard to state, although I realize as I was preparing my remarks, stating them involves some excessively long sentences, but let me try to put these issues as clearly as I can.

First of all, all citizens have just a limited amount of time to spend on public issues. Given that, where do you want them to put their time? Which is the most effective arena in a liberal democracy for citizens to be active in? Do you want citizens to be engaged and put their energy in these ad-hoc processes that have absolutely no provision for accountability or do you want citizens to put their energies into representative electoral politics with the greater discipline and structure that its inherent ability to provide accountability creates? Is a liberal civic order better served by bringing citizens, including hitherto excluded groups, to some new and transitory table, where they are free, by definition, simply to assert the atomistic needs that flow from their self-defined role as “stakeholders”? I’m a stakeholder; what am I supposed to do? I am supposed to assert my stake in the decision making process. In fact the only choice you make here is whether to be at

the table or not in the first place. Or is the civic order better served by encouraging electoral participation that involves a wide variety of activities, from participating in a city council meeting, writing letters to the editor, forming pressure groups and oversight groups, testifying before regulatory bodies, running for office – processes which create in a diverse society the shifting majorities and coalitions that provide participants in them with an education for the formation of common causes?

Now I am perfectly willing to acknowledge that I did not exactly put these questions in neutral terms. You can tell from the way I put them how I would answer these questions: it is better that people should be participating in existing electoral-political channels. But even if I haven't put them neutrally, I think they do accurately encapsulate what's at stake between Shutkin's vision of participatory planning processes with our stakeholders and our vision of citizen activity in the civic realm.

A final variant of civic environmentalism, which I have only more recently been made aware of, flows from the tension between the holistic view of nature and political decentralization that I have already mentioned. That tension has produced an effort to define civic environmentalism as a brand of regionalism. Regionalism is a word which comes in and out of the American political consciousness. It has something of a checkered history in this country generally; coming from Pittsburgh, I am particularly aware of this because Pittsburgh is famous for having rejected regionalism multiple times. It's one of the things we do when given the opportunity. Regionalism is another one of these planning-oriented progressive ideologies, that when given an environmental focus begins to return to its roots in the rather quirky thinking of the British regional planner named Patrick Getty who set all this in motion. But there is also now something called "the new regionalism" which argues that regional arrangements can stand between local governments, which are too fragmented – fragmentation is the key word here – to deal with spatially interconnected environments such as watersheds, which after all do not respect political boundaries and state or national governments which are too likely to seek one-size-fits-all solutions.

Furthermore, and this is often crucial in the new regionalist argument, regionalism can help overcome the disparity in financial resources between urban and suburban parts of the country. Now it is the policy of the federal government, so far as I understand it, to encourage these kinds of regional institutions as a basis, for example, for transportation planning. There already exists a rather vast, if I dare say to the average citizen, pretty shadowy world of regional planning associations and agencies. I don't

mean to suppose that their shadowy status is a necessary part of their operation, but they are, at present anyway, certainly designed to be insulated from political accountability. If you have never heard of your local regional planning association, it is because you have never had any opportunity to have anything to do with reviewing or selecting the people who serve on it, in that capacity anyway. This lack of direct political accountability may be a reasonable counterweight to the pork-barrel politics of federal infrastructure projects. But even if that is true, it is not at all clear that these kinds of organizations are obviously well suited to a civic environmentalism that seeks greater engagement of citizens in local political processes for which they are accountable in dealing with environmental problems.

Now in conclusion, the varieties of civic environmentalism that I have spoken of today seem to me to share a common defect, when compared to what Marc has told you about. They fail to make their peace with turning environmental policy over to the realm of normal politics, hence their biases toward centralized technical solutions or the mantra of participation. Four decades of environmental crisis rhetoric has entrenched a sense that we need emergency action and therefore we can't afford to let normal political processes work themselves out. But what that does is to ignore the fact that issues rise to the level of political problems because people don't share the same outlook. They don't agree. Indeed, they may well have irreconcilable views. Extreme problem definitions and radically simple solutions that result from crisis rhetoric will be the more convincing the less people actually know and the less responsibility they have, that is to say, the less they have to know because they have no responsibility for the end result. In the real world, the need for trade-offs, for compromises, for incrementalism, is likely to be clearer to people the closer they are to the problem at hand and the more responsibility they have for dealing with it.

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Questions and answers

Question: I am from the Kennedy School, Belfer Center of Science and International Affairs and we have a policy research project called "Environmental Regionalism." In our modest view, civic environmentalism as originally propounded by DeWitt John has become a functional as well as a historical anachronism due to the fact that at the very local level, interests are so overwhelmingly parochial there is nothing environmental that expands beyond this scope, the boundary of a municipality, and few environmental issues do that these days. If you have a concern with a point-source

kind of pollution, certainly those point-sources are in several farms and several counties spanning several municipalities. In fact most of the environmental point and non-point solutions we have now span boundaries and it is only within those boundaries which local initiatives can be effective. So we have gone beyond that entirely and now are in the mode and in the discourse with DeWitt John over the idea of environmental regionalism, assuming that we need to go across boundaries and to deal with whole watersheds and with whole multiple jurisdictions in order to get anything accomplished in the area of environmentalism at a sub-national level. Do you have any comment?

Landy: The difficulty that I have with regionalism is not that it does not exist, but that there is too much of it. A wise man, Marc Roberts, who co-wrote *The Environmental Protection Agency: Asking the Wrong Questions*, made a comment that I have found useful over the years: "Problems have no joints." Problems never neatly fit within any particular jurisdiction. The trouble I have with regionalism is that every environmental problem invites different regional solutions. We have a watershed for one problem, we have an airshed for another problem, we have some complicated set of forests for a third problem, and we have some complicated coastal estuarine situation for yet another problem. If we try to develop government on a problem-oriented basis, we end up with too many governments. The great virtue of the American constitutional order is that we have general-purpose government. It's not that localities, states or even the nation are perfectly ordered to take into account each environmental problem, or any other form of problem, but because they are general-purpose, people can identify with them. You can't identify with your planning region. You can identify with your locality because it has a charter from the state and it has had it for maybe hundreds of years. Your state is a constitutionally organized entity and therefore you know who your representatives are and who your governor is. It's not that I disrespect regionalism, it's that I respect it so much that I don't think that it's a useful concept for an institutional design.

Question: May I rejoin?

Landy: Sure.

Question: Thank you very much. I think what marked the issues that you phrased, that regionalism tends to have defined another macro-boundary, which itself has difficulty transgressing because it becomes a mono-problem, then that is being addressed. If you view regionalism not as a gov-

ernment regime or jurisdiction, but more like an amorphous *governance* regime which redefines itself dimensionally in accordance with the problems and the stakeholders who need to be involved in the solution, then you have a different kettle of fish with regionalism.

Landy: You see, I'm a constitutionalist. I like formal government. I like government structures to be limited and circumscribed. I think the way to handle regional problems is bring in all the relevant mayors, all the relevant states on an ad-hoc basis and deal with it that way but don't set up any structures. The structures are too sacred. Structures should be limited to the constitutional ones.

Question: I am one of those people who hadn't heard too much about civic environmentalism, so I had two questions. I remember an article "California in the Clouds" which was in the *Wall Street Journal* a year ago. For those who hadn't read that article, it talked about how California had a major change in CO₂ emission standards. I remember reading that article and feeling almost aghast that that could have been done in that manner. At that time, I was a District Commander in the Army Corps of Engineers in the Detroit District. I worked with lots of biologists, environmentalists, and people with that kind of training, and I remember that there was a lot of discussion on whether or not there is global warming, what the emission rules are, and it was a very contentious issue. Then I read about civic environmentalism and saw that it was a bipartisan group of experts. I think for many folks, especially in the national movements, it almost comes down to a philosophy of government. So I fear, as I read through this, that those people who might not be of a certain political persuasion would say that civic environmentalism is just from a different set of politics, therefore it is not the unbiased science.

For those of us in government, it's tough because when you don't have regionalism, the way to support this is to have local standards. But when the government is putting these standards out and you have somebody who disagrees, and they take you to court, eventually what they do is go up the chain. So to be fair, what is the overall standard? Because they can't allow a standard locally, but remember that this is part and parcel of regulation. They can't say, "Well, so-and-so is the District Commander and that's what he wants to do," so how do you square that philosophy with a government that is in many ways, in the regulatory arena, oriented in the diametrically opposed direction?

Rubin: Well, I think what you have said is a great indication of the uphill battle that any effort at serious decentralization of environmental policy is going to face. The present default sometimes seems to be that at some point in the process, a federal official will be able to say, "This is it, so fall into line." But granting the possibility that it is an uphill battle, then it is a battle that we're choosing to fight, that is to say, we are trying to get people to think about environmental issues in ways that don't make them as inclined to seek the kinds of "solutions" they do under the present regulatory regime. We are trying to suggest the good reasons why we can reconsider environmental laws that ultimately place all of that responsibility at the federal level and begin to consider serious devolution of authority, with the problems that that may sometimes create. It certainly is true that it is going to be harder for big corporations, harder for federal agencies to deal with diversity of standards than it is for them to deal with one standard. But at certain points you have to make a choice about what you are really trying to do in engaging citizens productively in an effort at self-government. If some of those productive efforts at self-government make life a little harder for others, well, that may just have to be the case.

Question: Can you give some examples of civic environmentalism working?

Landy: Sure. We have kind of a stock set of examples and one of the things that I would love to do is to hear some of your examples, because frankly I am getting a little tired of mine. But they are real. I will give you an example of the Maine lobsters.

Many of you are familiar with the problems that we have on the East Coast with fish stocks. There are problems keeping the fish stocks from diminishing and in fact we have failed at George's Bank and several other locations where there have been terrible problems of fish stock depletion. In Maine, a very different approach was taken. Rather than relying on the whole rubric of federal law and federal agencies to enforce limits on catches and that sort of thing, which have failed dreadfully up till now, the local lobstermen took the initiative and established district councils on a harbor basis. Lobsters are harvested harbor by harbor. These local councils essentially created their own charters and their own rules for governing, harbor by harbor, such that individual lobstermen understood what catch limitations they were being held to, what the rules were governing the size of lobsters, what you had to throw back, and what you were allowed to keep. The actual procedures weren't that different from what the federal government had tried to mandate, but the fact that the lobstermen were

responsible for enforcing it themselves meant that they actually did it. All the kinds of evasions that these lobstermen were capable of when they were being governed by federal bureaucrats became unavailable to them, because they always had to come back to the same harbor and their buddies were there at the dock waiting for them. The remarkable thing was that this regime was in fact created and seems to be working. To be honest, the science is insufficient to answer the question about how well this regime is working. All we can say for sure is that it is being observed, that the limits are being kept to, that the rules are being enforced and that the lobsters are bountiful. I would love to be able to tell you that the reason that the lobsters are so bountiful is entirely because of this wonderful civic environmental regime, but I don't know that and neither do the lobstermen. But still, it's a pretty darn good example.

There are wonderful examples also from overseas, lest you think that this is a purely American game. The International Crane Foundation has set up a program in China to encourage villagers not to kill the cranes that fly by, or more to the point, destroy the habitat that they need on their long migrations all the way through China. The Foundation is helping these villagers set up cooperative tourism and habitat protection programs such that the habitat protection they engage in leads to some good local tourism so that they make more money than by destroying the cranes' habitat for traditional crops. I've got lots more.

Rubin: Let me just highlight something that I think was implicit in what Marc said and that I might make a little more explicit. In both of these instances, you have some observable generation of social capital. In the lobstermen case, you have a changing relationship among the lobstermen themselves, not, I guess, the most convivial group on their own. But here they had something to talk about, something to decide about, and those relationships began to change as they got more responsibility. In the Chinese case, there is this wonderful instance of the village being aided by the Crane Foundation and the villagers were actually engaged in decision-making and benefiting from the proceeds in a very direct way. The village next door wanted to get in on this too, and they got the central government to build them a tower from which tourists could watch the cranes. As we were told the story, the tower stood empty because the infrastructure that had been developed in Village A simply didn't come to exist in Village B where this thing was just plunked down by the central government. Social capital generation is a very important aspect of our environmentalism.

Question: I have to ask the other side of that question. Do you know of any instances where local civic environmentalism has failed, where engaging the community ended up with bad results?

Landy: I would think they are quite common. I don't have one to pull out of my hat, but my guess is that they would be common. Part of the problem is definition. Bill Shutkin would argue that every time a community doesn't choose the strictest environmental solution on the table, it has failed. It seems to me that is an illegitimate definition of failure. People should have the right to choose different results, so I wouldn't be willing to use this as a criterion of outcome myself; you have to look at process. It would be easy to imagine lots and lots of cases where the process falls apart, either because the community is simply too fractured and it fails, or because of chicanery. Never underestimate the ability of people to lie, cheat and steal; any process can be undermined. I have seen processes at the federal level undermined on the same basis. But I would certainly concede that it would probably have a fairly high failure rate.

Question: I have been a bird watcher for over twenty-five years. When I first started bird watching, you could go to Central Park and see thousands of warblers. It was not a problem. Most of these birds migrate from South America to North America and other birds from North America breed up in the Arctic. The Arctic tern and a lot of seabirds go from the North Atlantic to the South Atlantic, up to Africa, and the pelagic birds circle the world. Since I have been bird watching, certain species have declined, most notably the warblers and thrushes, while the populations of some other birds like gulls have exploded, because of people. I would have to disagree with the local thing here. I would say this is one problem that really fits the Audubon motto: think locally, act globally. Do you agree or disagree with that?

Rubin: On the one hand, we really do want to avoid seeming to claim that civic environmentalism is for everything. It is not for everything and we have to recognize the problems where it is more or less appropriate, just as based on the previous two questions, one of the things we hope to do over the course of the next month is to look at successes and failures and determine the best practices. But you probably know better than I do about the success of organizations like Ducks Unlimited and their very local techniques of creating habitat to improve the chances for breeding and for migration stopovers. There are things one can do at a very local level to aid bird populations, even if they're breeding somewhere else.

Question: That's the problem with birds: they fly.

Rubin: You may have a perfect example of where the solution of civic environmentalism isn't going to work very well. But when it comes to species preservation, are we really satisfied with national efforts? I don't think actually that is such a great record there.

Question: I just wanted to bring up the point that you can do both things. The Audubon Society says, "Think locally, act globally." Sometimes both things need to be brought together to work.

Landy: You do have a very important point. It's not as if we expect some kind of completely anarchic world in which there is no one trying to look at the big picture and the community kind of closes in on itself. There have to be people saying, "Oh, my goodness, birds fly from one pole to the other; we have to have some sort of coordination of activities along the way." On the other hand, there is no problem less suitable to command-and-control regulation than habitat preservation. It never really works. You always have private property owners and they are going to figure out a way to get around efforts to regulate their property. In the case I am most familiar with, in Costa Rica, there has been reasonable success in preserving the habitat of the quetzal. This bird migrates vertically from the mountains to the cloud forest down to the rain forest and it really needs to get down. People are destroying the forest for cattle grazing, which destroys the species habitat. There was virtually no success in terms of simply trying to confiscate people's property to make sure that they don't graze. They will shoot you. Instead, there have been wonderful efforts at community-wide negotiations about developing corridors. So if I know that I can raise cattle on most of my property, but I'll just leave this one stretch that connects where I am on the hillside to the property beneath me, whose owner will do the same thing, I am more willing to go along. You literally can look on a Costa Rican mountainside and see corridors of habitat preservation such that the quetzal can get down and up. It's not perfect; they are too small and it would be better if they were bigger, but we live in the real world here. Compared to the effort to force this sort of thing, the ability to mobilize local support for the program by devising a solution that doesn't deprive people of their livelihood; they don't need every inch of their property for cattle raising, they really can afford to leave some of it, and if they know that it's part of a chain, they are much more likely to participate. So far the results seem to be pretty good, though it is very hard to do the kind of research that would let you know for sure that the quetzal is safe.

Question: I want to go back to the Maine lobstermen. I know about the story, it's a great organization, but I am a little confused about how this fits into your criticism of other people's versions of civic environmentalism. One, it seems it was formed on a problem-by-problem basis level, two, it's an extra-government organization, three, it's state legislature. So could you go into that a little bit more?

Rubin: The last point, I think, actually is the point of my criticism. It is very important to me, in terms of the institutionalization, that the lobsterman governance system was created by the state legislature. That is not actually, to my knowledge anyway, characteristic of a lot of the kinds of "visionary processes" someone like Shutkin talked about. The lobsterman structure was an arrangement with the government, the state government of Maine. It's true, it does add another kind of governance. I wouldn't say that is never appropriate, but it does so within the framework of normal electoral and accountable politics. It also itself is a highly accountable body, the members within these groups and the state between the groups and the rest of the citizens of Maine. So the problems of accountability here do not seem to me to be so terribly great. I really do have it in for these ad-hoc, participatory stakeholder decision-making processes that just come and go and who knows why and who knows where. If you are going to do this sort of thing, then it seems to me that the lobstermen are a far more satisfactory model, because they thought about the issue of accountability and responsibility in a very clear-headed way.

Landy: I would concede a lot to you in the sense that it's risky. "War is too dangerous for the generals" – pardon my saying this in front of the Army Corps of Engineers – and lobstering, in some ways, could be too important to be left to lobstermen. There are risks in devolving power and responsibility so narrowly. I think in this case they worked, but you wouldn't want to adopt this as a kind of across-the-board solution: *every* time there is an environmental problem, devolve it to the people most involved, because they know the situation.

Rubin: We are not interested in abandoning federalism, but redressing what seems to us to be an invalid balance between state and local organs.

Question: Well, I think it's important for us all to keep in mind that we have a long way to go for a pure civic environmentalism system to be permitted to work. Right now we have the heavy hammer of the federal government poised over virtually every aspect of our lives, on environmental issues. The bottom line is, in many instances, like the Maine lobstermen, it

is very likely that had this quasi-government entity not been created, that the government would have come in and run it per se, instead of allowing a quasi-government organization to be set up. In Virginia there are a number of examples of successful projects that have been undertaken, that have advanced the cause of the environment and the community. I think of the Elizabeth River project. Yes, government is involved in that, but this is an instance where people in the community came together, private citizens, local government officials and indeed the corporate community located on the Elizabeth River and banded together and said we want to engage in activities that will improve the quality and condition of the Elizabeth River. There has been government money put in there, the government pays attention to it, the E. P. A. takes great credit for it, but the bottom line is that a group of local people was the catalyst. A similar project is out on the Shenandoah River in the northwestern part of the state where, yes, there is some state involvement and any time there is a success, you can be sure the Feds are going to be in there taking credit for it, but ultimately it is the citizens coming together in a voluntary way. There would be more citizen voluntary action in more areas if people still didn't have in the back of their minds, "Oh God, the Feds are going to come in and do something for us, or to us, anyway." So there is a long way to go to move back to the local level, the opportunities for people who not only take onto their own communities the responsibility for this stewardship, but to believe that they really are responsible and Big Brother is now out there looking over their shoulders just waiting to do something, if they don't do the right thing.

Landy: I just have a brief comment. I love this word "stewardship." It's a word that we would like to co-opt for our side of the debate. We do live by metaphor, the metaphor of interconnectedness, this metaphor, that metaphor. A beautiful metaphor for people who have our understanding of the environmentalism really is stewardship. We are responsible for the discourse and that's the underdeveloped side of environmentalism, generally speaking.

Question: For the gentleman who was looking for failures in civic environmentalism, I suggest you read Daniel Kemmis' *This Sovereign Land, A New Vision for Governing the West* for the failure of the re-introduction of the grizzly bear in the mountain states. That wasn't one of the successes. Also Charlie, I believe you indicated some disillusion or pessimism that the federal government would not take the initiative to stimulate or catalyze some of the movements which would essentially be local initiatives in civic environmentalism. When I came to the Hill in 1998, I felt the same way you do. I looked around at all the legislation that was in process, that

was in the hopper and had gone through and had not quite made it and I found that, in fact, the civic environmentalism train is already running full steam down the track and that there was a lot going on here, but nobody knew what to call it. The problem was it didn't have a moniker. A couple of those that I remember are the Gateway Communities Initiative from the Forest Service and the Park Service, the Chartered Forest Commission that started on the Hill, the Community Forestry Funding Initiative that was started on the Hill, and a number of others that had as their intent the stimulation, the funding, the assistance and the provision for a higher level of civic initiative in matters of the environment. I think that for those of us who are interested in pushing the federal government to do more of such involvement, the opportunity is here.

Question: This gentleman asked a very good question. We in the military say that the military always learns more from defeats than we do from victories, so it is very important to understand what a failure in civic environmentalism looks like. I've seen a number of failures, but you know, on the surface it seems like a failure but really it is almost never a failure of civic environmentalism, in my experience. For example, you read about them in the papers all the time, and there's a failure, my boss just had to leave to go to the White House, he gets more work, because here's what happened: a local community comes to some sort of agreement on something on shorelines. In Michigan we had something called Save Our Shorelines, having to do with declining levels in the Great Lakes just recently, and vegetation; to some it's nuisance, to others it was vegetation protected by the Clean Water Act. After coming to an agreement with multiple party owners, congressional staffs, and even some organizations, in the end those who claim, "Hey, you're letting the standards go," what would they do? You find yourself in court or all of a sudden a congressional law or bill is being passed. That is always the problem with civic environmentalism, because if you have a disinterested party or a party that claims they're interested – which didn't happen in the lobstermen case – they will say, this is no problem. We will go to Washington and we will fix it and pass some sort of standard, that then takes away that authority from that local community.

The Corps of Engineers is a contentious agency because we have our share of very important issues; you read in the paper about the Corps of Engineers being sued. Sometimes what happens is that some national organization says, "We cannot allow that local community to set that standard." To them, letting people set their own standards threatens a political philosophy. But to speak for them, some of them have traveled abroad, for example to Eastern Europe like I have; you go over there and you can't

wait to come back to the United States because you cannot believe how bad that environment is. Those watchdogs then believe no standard is ever too low or too high.

Landy: Your point is extremely important. First of all, I personally am very critical of the national environmental organizations, but I would be the first to admit that their zealousness has some decent roots: you don't want to become like Eastern Europe. But the national environment organizations cling to these national standards as to a lifeboat. They feel that you can't depart from national standards even if they are inefficient, even if they are straight-jacketing, even if they deprive communities of their liberties because they are something to hold on to and we can enforce them and we can keep the worst from happening. I empathize with that, I think it's a decent motivation, of course, but you know we are not going to go back, we are not going to become like Eastern Europe. We have won great battles for the environment, both practical legislative battles but more importantly, internal battles in terms of people's own sensibilities. Nobody wants to do that. The vast majority of the American citizenry loves high environmental quality and therefore can be expected to participate. It's also important to remember Charlie's earlier point, which is that there are factors at work beyond our control that impinge on civic environmentalism. If the federal courts continue over the next twenty or thirty years to think that they have to take every issue under their wing, then not much civic environmentalism is going to happen. However the courts have already shown tremendously greater reticence than they did twenty years ago. Congress thinks that you should have laws about everything. Congress can prevent any of this from happening, and Congress likewise is changing, as we've found already. So there are mega-forces at work that can undermine civic environmentalism and perhaps did at certain moments. But I don't necessarily see them as being quite as intrusive and overweening as they were in the 1970s and 1980s, so some of this is becoming more benign. We really have to rid ourselves of the notion that if you leave communities to their own devices, they will all turn into Eastern Europe.

Q: You may want to study the \$7 billion Everglades program. I would contend that it has many elements of civic environmentalism. We have quasi-public groups, federal, state, main federal agencies involved, civic advisory groups all throughout Florida. A significant effort was extended to have virtually every interest group getting the chance to gripe. So with some fits and starts, that project is sort of moving along and we'll see how successful we are some years down the road.

Landy: Very impressive.

Question: When you began your talk, you were talking about how policy could affect citizenship. I am just curious about what type of policies you are suggesting to promote good citizenship and good stewardship?

Landy: I don't even think it's important that the policies promote citizenship on their face, because sometimes citizenship is one of those words that can sound awfully drab and dull when you tell people you are doing it. It's like my kids: when I tell them to eat something healthy, they won't eat it; if I don't tell them, they eat it anyway. The most important thing about policy, I think, that will influence citizenship is that we struggle to make sure as much policy gets decided locally, at almost any time, such that citizens more and more have the opportunity to develop their civic muscles. You can't be a good citizen if you're not making decisions. As Charlie was right to say, almost all the most important decisions are representative and choosing people to represent you is an important decision. But there are certain kinds of questions that can go beyond that, where citizens in the relevant neighborhoods and towns can actually be the decision-makers about the space that surrounds them. That's really what I mean, rather than the policies having some label that says "citizenship." Because really the act of having to make the policy, the opportunity to do that, that I think is the most important thing. But only as a precursor. Towns need public spaces around for these sorts of things to happen. I think policies that promote park space, that promote public spaces of various kinds tend to be citizenship-friendly. Sidewalks, for example. People actually walk on the sidewalks. In my town, I have no sidewalks and I really feel the lack. Tocqueville had us believe that citizens tend toward civic involvement, rather than tend to indifference.

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