Article

Eco-Governmentality: A Discursive Analysis of State-NGOs-Youth Relations in Singapore

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Abstract: This article seeks to address the gap in representing micro-level civil society voices and contribute to literature on state-society relations in Singapore's environmental movement. Given the present constraints of state-NGO communication and cooperation, the state and NGOs negotiate the restrictions by grooming youths as agents of change. Through in-depth interviews, it explores how environmentalism is represented differently through various discourses by the social actors; state, NGOs and youths. By using eco-governmentality as a framework and through discursive analysis, we argue that state-society cooperation in environmentalism is hindered by lack of clear and effective communication channels, as well as expertise and knowledge barriers. In addition, investing in youths has led to an altered dynamic of state-society relations and a greater variety in discourses on environmental advocacy. Owing to the youths' capability for spreading social awareness and ideas, this is an area that requires open discussion in order to achieve better state-civil society cooperation.

Keywords: environmentalism; eco-governmentality; youths; state; civil society; discourse; Singapore

1. Introduction

This research is primarily interested in studying state-society relations in the field of environment. The paper aims to address the research question of whether there are common grounds for state-society cooperation and if so, what these common grounds are. The Singapore state (synonymous with the government), exists as a developmental state as a result of its post-colonial pro-economic policies (Kong 2000). A developmental state as defined by Castells (1992), is when its legitimacy is founded upon its ability to promote economic growth and sustain development. The Singapore state prides itself for these attributes and its general success in economic stability. However, the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in civil society have contested notions towards state policies, sometimes citing an over-emphasis on economic factors (Lyons and Gomez 2005). This can lead to some tensions between civil society groups and the state. In support of a complex, dynamic relationship between state and society, we propose a study to look at the possibilities for better cooperation between state-society to achieve commonality in environmental action and goals.

Environmental concerns have become increasingly a part of both national and international debates and policies. However, while the discourse is moving towards international partnership and policies, it is essential to remain active on the national level since the cooperation of different social actors within a country allows for effective national policies that international policies are dependent upon (Haas et al. 1993). Notably, the foremost emphasis of Singapore's direction towards environmental advocacy is in 'environmental sustainability'. The concept in the Singapore context essentially pertains to a plan that seeks to combine the environment and the economy, such that the Singapore economy is not impaired in the move towards a sustainable environment. As a developmental state, insofar as Singapore is interested to protect its environment, it is mostly carried out only where it allows economic

development to continue to thrive. This is evident in the speech given by the Singapore Minister for the Environment & Water Resources, Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan, on the importance of sustainability and caring for the environment, "Our quality of life as human beings and indeed even our vitality and viability as an economic entity depends upon this concept of sustainable development" (MEWR 2012a).

As part of Singapore's national strategy to improve her environment, the state launched a Green Plan in 2002 with targets focusing on environmental sustainability to be achieved by 2012 and a sustainable blueprint guide to directions for sustainability until 2030 (MEWR 2012a). Main targets in the state's environmental strategy plans (MEWR 2012b) include air and climate change, water and waste management and international environmental relations, etc. In order to achieve this, the state put forth a concept of different stakeholders belonging to the 3Ps, namely people, private and public, directed towards the formation of a collaborative team for the promotion of environmental ownership (NEA 2002). Environmental plans and advocacy are thus informed by the decisions of a partnership among the different sectors; citizens, corporate sector and businesses, NGOs and the government.

Historically, Singapore has had a top-down approach from economic to environmental issues, which has been viewed as largely successful (Ooi 1999). There are a number of NGOs with a notable presence in promoting environmental awareness and action, especially in terms of public outreach. However, as Ooi (1999) points out, the civil society and environmental groups are not directly involved in environmental policies and implementation. In introducing the 3P partnership, the state encourages involvement of corporations and NGOs to improve the environmental education and participation of the public but does not yet set in place a channel for these other non-state groups to participate in policy decision-making processes. Such an arrangement suggests that environmental policy implementation may have yet to achieve a level of agreement and support from the bottom and ground-level made up of the citizenry and NGOs.

In trying to explicate Singapore's direction of environmentalism, it is important to discover how the partnership can succeed, through active and effective cooperation. These basic questions arise: What are the various stances of the state and the NGOs and the citizens? How are the state's discourses on the environment internalized or countered by the people? What are the expectations they have of each other within this complex relationship, particularly where these groups of people overlap and coincide? What are the different understandings of ground-up initiatives and approaches? And importantly, what are the proposed strategies of the different parties in achieving environmental awareness and consciousness and how do we make sense of it?

This paper hence seeks to answer the above questions through explicating the data from a series of semi-structured interviews, insofar as the perspectives of these different social actors and their experiences can help to contribute to a less-than-well-examined area of Singapore's environmental movement. It investigates in particular, the opinions of the youths, who notably form a large target group of both the government and NGOs, in terms of spreading environmental awareness and cultivating a group of future leaders. The study also analyses the opinions of environmental NGO leaders and members on Singapore's direction towards environmental advocacy. The empirical research conducted within the network of the state, public and private, will focus mainly on NGOs and youths and also generate insight from a state representative.

The paper is organized into five following sections; theoretical framework, literature review focusing on environmental management in Singapore, methodology, analysis and discussion of results and conclusion and limitations. Following this introduction, the second section provides eco-governmentality as a theoretical framework to understand the complex relations within this network of key partners of the state, NGOs and youths and the impact of governance from top-down. The literature review gives a clearer understanding of existing ideas and through a critical perspective, situates this paper in the broader field of environmental sociology. In the next section, the paper elaborates on the research methodology adopted, such as type of respondents and relevant questions. The discussion and analysis present the research data and findings relevant to answering the research question, as well as provide suggestions on possible channels for bottom-up intervention that can

contribute to increased effectiveness in achieving a common goal towards environmental action. In the conclusion, we will give a summary of the paper, its research significance, the limitations and consequently the impetus for further research.

2. Theoretical Framework

It is imperative to study and scrutinize the principles that have been propagated through the state and its translation from the top-down. Expanding on this concept of top-down propagation of ideas, the research uses a Foucauldian theoretical perspective to understand the effectiveness of the government rhetoric on the environment to the people. Discourse is defined as practices that are carried out according to a certain set of rules and conditions that govern beliefs and behaviours (McHoul and Grace 1993). Discourses exist in societies, often in contestation with one another, forming dominant and counter-discourses. This applies not only to the area of politics but also to a larger range of discourses and practices informed by various forms of knowledge, through which subjectifying processes are created and carried out (Collier 2009). The relevance of using a discursive analysis in this study is to highlight the possible counter-discourses that exist and how youths, NGOs and the state negotiate the dominant discourse. By studying the responses given, specific terms and ways of thinking about and explaining the social phenomenon and the 'truths' associated with these discourses can be elaborated upon. Indeed, as Rose and Miller (1992, p. 179) aptly states, the rationalities involved "are morally coloured, grounded upon knowledge and made thinkable through language". It is also crucial that discursive analysis is used as it eschews any particular judgment of a 'right/wrong' divide in the notions and practices suggested by the different social actors. Following the postmodern tradition of suggesting the lack of absolute truths, this research's intention is to make sense of the different discourses rather than produce a value judgment about them.

Achieving environmental sustainability requires a concerted effort of the different social actors, thus it is paramount that the state ensures its citizenry are agreeable to the policies or stance it takes. This discourse is likely to be the dominant one, though like all other discourses, it follows a certain set of logic that people can or cannot identify with (McHoul and Grace 1993). Here, it is important to note that while a discourse in itself is neither right nor wrong, it can be *presented* as 'right' following a certain set of logic that is argued as the 'truth'. Application of the theory of eco-governmentality to the methods and corresponding success or lack of, of the state to govern its citizens' behaviour and to internalize the discourses of environmental sustainability, will further expound on the threads of common agreement that may exist between the state and its people (Goldman 2001). Situated within the broader field of political ecology, eco-governmentality—also known as environmentality—is an extension of the Foucauldian concepts of self-governance and power-knowledge, where they are applied to the environment field and are particularly useful in understanding the Singaporean case for environmentalism. According to Foucault (1982), power is subjectifying in that it creates the subject and exists *through* relations between subjects, presenting a different understanding beyond power as 'acted upon'. Power is not possessed by any social actor but is constructed through the network of people.

This research studies the influences of state discourse on the youths. Through the dissemination of information and knowledge of the environment from the state to the youths, the individuals are subject to the dominant state discourse which will in turn influence their conduct. By using eco-governmentality as a framework, the paper will discover if self-governance is inherent in the environmental attitudes of the youths and NGOs and whether they engage in conducting their own conduct to suit the state discourse. In addition, the iconoclast concept of power-knowledge by Foucault also highlights the possible use of truth-claims that are deemed as rational and that people's behaviours and actions should be governed by these 'truths'. By discovering if the youths and citizens' discourses are congruent with state discourse and truth-claims, we will be able to show the areas of existing eco-governmental elements. As these 'truths' play a part in the construction of people's knowledge and consequently their actions, power is actually the knowledge that is disseminated from others

that informs self-knowledge (Foucault 1982). Likewise, the act of citizenry regulating their conduct, thoughts and bodies, is through the specific practices known as technologies of the self, as mechanics that affect what they say and do (Foucault et al. 1988). These technologies of the self can be seen in effect through the data of this research as the youths negotiate their own experiences and behaviour throughout the interview process.

The theoretical framework of eco-governmentality and a discursive analysis in understanding the beliefs and practices of youths and NGOs, will allow for exploration of this complex network of state, NGOs and youths. This will aid in situating environmentalism within a more heterogeneous space, determined not just by top-down and a singular source of power/knowledge but by multiple sources (Collier 2009). The study will later delineate how they negotiate their experiences and in turn the meaning of environmentalism and eco-consciousness. The emphasis on meaning-making by the different parties are crucial to a deeper understanding of environmental advocacy and the congruence and contestations in notions of environmental conduct and the areas for concern and action.

3. Environmental Management in Singapore

The wealth of environmental sociology research is breath-taking, yet the study has only more recently begun to pick up pace in Asia.

Scott's (1998) book *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* has influenced many works in its impactful analysis of the potential detriments of governing the environment with little regard to local conditions. The book highlights the issue of states providing top-down solutions to environmental concerns which fails to account for reality at the ground level. This is augmented by Scott's (1998) critique of 'high modernism', whereby governments engage in supposedly rational methods of social engineering and deliberate urban planning results in a rigidity which is undesirable to the society. Such tendencies are apparent in the tightly-controlled governance of the Singapore state, where top-down approaches to problems remain the dominant factor of influence in public policy.

In East Asia and in Singapore, climate change and sustainability policies and debates mostly surround market-favouring, state-led ecological modernization principles (Wong 2012). However, this form of state-led ecological modernization may result in largely state-determined interests and less representation of non-state players' interests (Perry and Sheng 1999). The definitions of state versus non-state interests are not as well defined in the literature for Asia as it has been in the West.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien-Loong said in his speech at the Singapore International Water Week, "[city urban planning] needs long-term planning, careful execution, disciplined implementation and enforcement, because it is easy to sacrifice long-term objectives, environmental objectives, or urban planning objectives, for short-term advantage" (SG Press Centre 2012). His speech points at the state's desire for a well-planned, comprehensive and perennial set of environmental strategies but does not delve into the interests of the people, the state's own 'advantages' and concerns and its definitions of the environmental objectives and priorities in this plan. Analysis of the various interests is crucial to the field of environmentalism as environment is a collective property and has multiple stakeholders (Spangenberg and Lorek 2002). It is also evident that the specific locus of concerns and interests of the people and NGOs, are not often given detailed accounts within the literature for Asia.

Agrawal and Bauer (2005), in their book *Environmentality: Technologies of Government and the Making of Subjects*, argue against the tendency of existing literature to ignore the importance of the experiences that citizenry directly engages in with regard to both environment and politics. They propose a Foucauldian framework which delineates the new subjective positions of citizens through the interactions with governmentalized localities born from the decentralisation of environmental conservation and stewardship. Thus, the impacts of direct experiences of NGOs involved in environmental movements in Singapore in the making of their own subjective positions could be

studied using the Foucauldian framework, where the narratives of the people are not ignored in favour of formal policy analysis.

These interests can be better understood through the meaningful experiences and personal accounts of the youths and NGOs, which the study hopes to contribute to. In addition, Singapore makes for an interesting study, as it has a strong state with a general marginalization of the citizenry and civil society voices (Koh and Ling 2004). Thus, examining the Singaporean case of environmentalism can augment the research in South-East Asia, where state voices are more or less thought of as the dominant discourses in society.

3.1. Singapore's Ecological Modernization Trajectories

The concept that Singapore will be able to derive and sustain its economic development and benefits without causing unnecessary trade-offs to the environment, necessarily emerges from the ecological modernization theory (EMT). This theory suggests that people will be able to effectively work out a system that complements both economic progression and environmental wellbeing through the incorporation of nature into our current institutions and infrastructure (Jänicke and Weidner 1997). From the early 1980s, EMT was proposed to counter the more radical Neo-Marxist theories that were less supportive of production and modernization (Andersen and Massa 2000). In line with an assumption of human capabilities as problem-solvers, the EMT propounded the possibility of improving the environment, not through the curbing of production, but through further production (Orsato and Clegg 2005). This pro-capitalistic, pro-economic development optimism embedded in this theory has undoubtedly become very popular among governments and remains the leading perspective in most policies and decision-making processes.

In the prevailing studies of EMT, the political ecology was examined in the form of Western policies and trajectories. Though the studies are increasingly being used to understand Asia's situation, they are not able to fully deduce the rationale behind the region's environmental policy reformation. Using the case of Singapore to 'shed light' on the state's role in EMT, Rose and Miller (1992, p. 179) argues that Asia's form of ecological modernization coupled with 'developmental state theory', "[are] not driven by free market economy forces but by the plan-rational and entrepreneurial state seeking new markets for economic growth and political legitimacy". This resonates with Singapore's rationalized, pro-economic development stance over the years. Thus, Wong (2012, pp. 96–97) sees the policy framings as largely 'economically deterministic', focusing on climate change as an issue to be solved by a 'green growth model', notably "without fundamental changes to the mode of capitalist production, consumption and accumulation". This form of ecological modernization policy tends to focus on technological solutions and material innovation instead of societal regulation.

3.2. Role of NGOs in Environmentalism

The current state of environmental degradation suggests that sole dependence on the government will not be a long-term solution (Fien et al. 2002).

Ooi's research also highlights the need for increased "citizen participation to keep down the costs of environmental management for the state" (Ooi 1999, p. 106). In particular, Ooi's (1999) research delves into the possibilities for civil society organizations' participation in environmental management but also in altering state-citizen relations. She cites the general impotence of governments in South-East Asia in solving problems due to underlying political tensions, while NGOs have the mobility and access to handle these issues without the political stakes. Despite the NGOs' potential importance and roles in achieving environmental sustainability in Singapore, they face several constraints. Ooi (1999) suggests that given the restricted autonomy of civil society environmental groups, they are unable to maximize their full potential. However, the state is increasingly recognizing the important role the former has to play in finding appropriate solutions to environmental sustainability problems.

The relevance of Ooi's (1999) article lies in her analysis of the effectiveness of NGOs in Singapore. The results of her research show that NGOs such as Nature Society Singapore (NSS) and Singapore

Environment Council (SEC) have been active in nature conservation or promotion of environmental awareness but are similar to other NGOs in that these civil society organizations are unable to participate more fully in policy decision making processes. Indeed, there is a need for NGOs' participation in policy formation, in order for policies to incorporate alternative interests. It is crucial to note that due to the absence of open environmental reporting, the citizens and NGOs in Singapore are not privy to certain information, knowledge or expertise (Perry and Sheng 1999; Islam and Quek 2014; Chan and Islam 2015). Yet, according to the framework of eco-governmentality and power/knowledge, such knowledge and information are necessary in helping them play a larger role in policy feedback and construction. The importance of power/knowledge is also supported in Chib et al.'s (2009) research, as they discovered that people who have a better understanding about environmental issues are far more likely to engage in environmentally advocacy and action.

3.3. Micro-Sociological Gap in Ground-Level Discourses

Many of the abovementioned research showed an increase in civil society freedom as the government is more willing to open up and engage them. As such, the contestations of dominant discourse and contrasting public interests are gaining better representation in the environmental arena. However, current literature fails to fully explore the interests of NGOs. In Kwan and Kwan and Stimpson's (2003) article, the government exhibits the tendency to accord all environmental actions and achievements to itself, downplaying the involvement of NGOs. In order to more clearly understand how NGOs are able to contest the dominant discourse, it is imperative to study NGOs' concerns and the interests of their members, who are important players in determining future directions of their organizations. The literature on environmentalism in Singapore, while having covered various aspects of civil society's participation, has yet to conduct in-depth studies of the youth in NGOs.

This paper gives primary focus to the youths as they are often, as the study will elucidate, located between state and NGOs. This is contrary to the common understanding of NGOs as the only link between state and citizens, because youths are also important resources to the state as a means of connecting to the larger public. Youths are considered a particular group of influence with specific roles to play that exceeds the common boundaries of citizens and NGOs. According to the World Youth Report by the United Nations (2003), youths are well-placed to consider and propose long-term environmental solutions as opposed to the short-term horizons that characterise market decision-making and politicians who are concerned with maintaining power for the subsequent elections. This is based on the assumption that youths with a larger portion of their lives to live, will inevitably experience longer-term harmful impacts associated with environmental concerns. The World Youth Report also calls attention to the fluidity of youth action beyond their participation in state-led or NGO-led activities. This is supported by Costanza-Chock's (2012) work which points out youths as a group of powerful agents and key actors in social change through their innovation and ability to mobilise others. More importantly, youths are able to operate social movements outside of formal channels such as political organisations, moving beyond even national boundaries with their extended networks.

Interestingly, youths who have been involved in state-led environmental activities (e.g., programmes and competitions) are also involved in the NGOs' environmental action, situating them where they can relate to both sides during any event of discursive contestation. As Birch and Phillips (2003) found, much of the public's understanding of NGOs has been confined to alternate voices rather than agents of action or change. The Singapore government has not been shy in its extensive marketing of youth action in the state-controlled national newspaper—The Straits Times—often reporting on the state's commendation of such activities through national recognition awards such as EcoFriend Awards (The Straits Times 2016). The dichotomy is increasingly shaped by the state presenting such actions as independent youth initiatives, while NGOs present youths as the face of their social movements. However, despite being often located within state-led or NGO-led groups, youths hold the potential to transcend beyond these boundaries to provide more innovation

or complexity to the environmental movement in Singapore. By studying youths, this research will show areas of action that NGOs are involved in, particularly in grooming youths as agents for environmental action and change. These youths would fall under the category of individuals with 'strong environmental values' and are likely to be more concerned with the state's environmental governance and concurrently, cooperate with the state to engage in environmental management (Dunlap et al. 2000).

The paper seeks to address the lack of literature in discursive accounts of the youths when subjected to both discourses by state and by possible counter-discourses of NGOs. By drawing on their own meaning-making, we will provide a bridge from macro to micro-level analyses, to explicate the underlying meanings in the macro-level relations. Thus, as elaborated in the analysis later, adding in the youths as a third group of social actors and understanding the social modes of the youths' interests and experiences, will provide more clarity to this state-civil society relations covered in prior literature.

4. Methodology

Youths in Singapore have been the target of many environmental state-led activities such as Youth for the Environment Day and several programmes (Youth Environmental Envoy Programme) and competitions (Greenwave Competition and National Climate Change Competition). Likewise, a large part of the NGOs' volunteer groups is comprised of youths (Green Kampong 2009). Youths who are active in environmental field are exposed to various discourses and are also at the forefront of spreading the environmental message to different groups in society. We posit that by studying youths, we can discover valuable knowledge from a group of individuals well-placed to understand, make sense of and negotiate the multiple discourses and ideas. This helps to illuminate the combined effect of the different discourses and what remains as the dominant discourse can still be countered in subtler ways when offered by those positioned within a continuum instead of on opposite spectrums.

4.1. Interview Respondents

In order to explore the subjective discourses of the different social actors, we conducted 20 in-depth interviews in 2013, comprising of NGO leaders, youths and one state official. The state official is the director of the 3P network and an officer in the National Climate Change Secretariat (NCCS), an agency established under the Prime Minister's Office to coordinate Singapore's domestic and international plans to address climate change. We also interviewed four respondents from environmental NGOs; representatives of Nature Society Singapore (NSS), Green Drinks Singapore and Environmental Challenge Organization (ECO) Singapore. The remaining of the respondents comprised of youths who are active in environmental activities via state or NGO platforms, or have previously participated in state-led environmental programs or competitions, which forms a total of 18 youths. Only one NGO leader is not considered a youth.

Singapore's definition of youths falls within the age range of 15 to 35 (National Youth Council 2011). Due to the ethics limitations for interviewing legally consenting adults, we interviewed youths aged 20 to 35. Youths who have greater in-depth knowledge of the field were interviewed due to their interests and participation, as their location between state and NGOs will allow them to better answer the research questions posted. The NGOs' leaders were founders or held positions within the abovementioned organizations. We believe that these respondents were able not just to explicate the ethos of their civil society organization but also to give their personal accounts for their interest and active participation in environmentalism. While we were only able to obtain one government official interviewee, his position as 3P network director allowed a response that was indicative of the state's view towards the environment and environmental sustainability. It should be noted that this sample is not a complete and comprehensive representation of the state or societal positions but are at least indicative of the variety of discourses that may exist at the different levels. Each interview lasted from one hour to two hours.

4.2. Sampling Process

Our initial respondents belong to two areas of contacts we have; the first being the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) team who emerged top place tied with the National University of Singapore (NUS) team in the NCCS Climate Change competition and the second being the ECO Singapore's team of volunteers. The rest of the respondents were located via snowball sampling from the initial respondents. All interviews were held face-to-face with the exception of one skype interview. Respondents were given the informed consent form to sign, where they had the option to select between allowing their names to be presented in the final research product, an option that was given as many of the respondents were key respondents, or to be given a pseudonym instead. All respondents consented to having their original names presented with their quotes. While our initial intention was to obtain more interviewees, who could represent the state, we only gained contact with the NCCS director of the 3P network but managed to conduct a valuable interview with opinions that we believe are reasonably indicative of the state's beliefs.

4.3. Methodological Tools and Data Analysis

These in-depth interviews were semi-structured, in order to elicit a more authentic response. According to Marvasti (2004), in-depth interviews are less likely to stifle the interviewees in responding freely to the questions and can also produce deeper understanding through complex data and allowing for flexibility according to the individual interviewees. Prior to the interviews, we had two pre-constructed lists of questions, one for state officials and one for youths and NGOs. The questions were very similar but some differences included asking for state current and future direction in environmental action versus measuring youth/NGOs responses towards current and future state directions. The interviews were conducted as per grounded theory, wherein questions were asked to gain an understanding instead of fitting into pre-planned theories. By using discursive analysis, we chose not to affect interviews by determining what the dominant discourse or counter discourses might be but to allow interviewees to elicit responses from their own experiences. This allows us to ground our theory in the data collected and not result in biases through enforcing any strict theoretical boundaries on the interviewees' responses (see, Glaser and Strauss 1967).

The first section of the interview questions examines perspectives towards the environment and environmental concerns in Singapore. The second section is based on concrete personal experiences (for youths and NGOs), with further questions to elicit responses for their rationale in making certain decisions or carrying out certain actions. Many questions in this section were made impromptu in the course of the interviews, as respondents had different experiences and it was inaccurate to make any assumptions about their rationales in constructing the questions. For example, there are questions asking about youths' experiences in environmental activities ("How was your experience throughout the programme/competition?") and asking for their rationale ("How did you learn of this programme and what made you decide to attend it?"). Probes and further questions were given to help interviewees elaborate upon their answers ("What did you learn from this program?" and "What are your opinions towards this new concept you have learnt?") The third section of the interview focused on more abstract concepts of state policies, possible channels for youths and NGOs in environmental advocacy and their ideals towards environmental cooperation.

Interview data were coded according to common themes and later analysed by examining these themes to see if they matched any major discourses in the current literature. Discourses were categorized into the well-constructed concepts available in the literature, including the aforementioned principles of Ecological Modernization Theory and also the Treadmill of Production (ToP) (See, Schnaiberg et al. 2002). However, during the data collection, we were aware that as researchers positioned within this environment field, we could introduce bias into the interview process. In order to ensure that our involvement as volunteers in the NGO, ECO Singapore, would not cause our respondents to assume our access to potentially 'common' knowledge and thus neglect on useful elaboration, we were careful to prompt them for the details to seemingly common-sense questions.

In being constantly vigilant, we questioned further on areas that we would have taken for granted as a participant in environmentalism, as a means of being critical, active and conscious of our own prejudices during the inquiry (Bourdieu 1992).

5. Discussion and Analysis

Within each theme, we will present the data through comparative analysis of the youths, state and NGOs' perspectives. The focus will be on their directions in environmentalism and the dominant state discourse versus the counter-discourses that NGOs may have. By doing so, we will provide a frame to situate the youths within this network and in making sense of their own experiences, study state-society relations.

5.1. Perspectives on Environmentalism and the Singaporean Mindset

The perspectives on environmentalism via the interview data are wide and varied but some common themes are detected; New Ecological Paradigm (NEP), Ecological Modernization Theory (EMT) and Treadmill of Production (ToP). EMT, as elaborated earlier, is characterized by a focus on adapting economic development to incorporate ecological principles, with concepts such as environmental sustainability and productivity and the ingenuity of human innovation (Orsato and Clegg 2005). NEP represents a shift towards understanding human relationship with nature as part of a larger complex ecosystem, whereby certain categories of thought are displayed, such a 'reality of growth limits', 'anti-anthropocentrism', 'fragility of nature's balance', 'rejection of exemptionalism' and 'possibility of eco-crisis' (Dunlap et al. 2000, p. 432). ToP is an insightful critical theory that challenges the norms and assumptions of production via the political cooperation of state, corporations and labour and the very real detrimental effect of material extraction of resources to the environment that follows (Schnaiberg et al. 2002). The various stances revealed by the respondents have been organised in Table 1.

Table 1. The various perspectives on environmentalism.

Environmentalism		
New Ecological Paradigm (NEP)	Ecological Modernization	Treadmill of Production (ToP)
State	State	
NGOs (3)	NGOs (2)	NGOs (2)
Youths (8)	Youths (5)	Youths (4)

Note: The number of respondents has been stated in the brackets next to each category.

Some NEP and EMT principles are shared amongst the state, NGOs and the youths. Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan said in his speech, "In this next age that we are moving into, human beings will have to re-learn to live in harmony with nature" (MEWR 2012a). This alludes to elements of NEP understanding towards the human-environment relations, where the resource limits are salient and humans are not excluded from their biophysical environments' material constraints (Dunlap et al. 2000). Such a view is shared among the NGOs and youths as well, often talking of the environment in that humans need to be aware of the finite resources and materials available on the Earth and how this should direct Environmentalism towards sustainability as a core framework. However, only one youth displayed anti-anthropocentric views, while all other respondents adhered to more anthropocentric rationales for environmental protection.

In addition, the NGOs and particularly the youths focus on another facet of the NEP scale, in that humans are having a detrimental impact on nature and should curb or reduce such activities where possible (Dunlap et al. 2000). The terms used such as "harmful" and "destroying" are used by the youths to describe the human impact on the Earth. Such a discourse adds on an extra dimension from merely needing to conserve resources for *future* use, to the need for rethinking and re-evaluating human activities and way of living. Notably, the state, through representations by the state official as

well as the Green Plan discussed earlier in the paper, does not agree with the 'reality of growth limits' NEP category.

Low Zhan Hong, recipient of the 2013 Outstanding Environmental Award at his school, Ngee Ann Polytechnic, as well as recipient of the Bayer Young Environmental Envoy Award in 2011, occupies a position within the government's group of chosen delegates of environmentally-conscious youths. In his interview, his views aligned with the government's rhetoric of ecological modernization principles.

> "In the end, it is about trying to sustainably improve our economic growth. We do not want to stop improving our economy, so it is about how we use our resources. I think we can keep growing our economy if we are innovative with our ways. For example, the [Public Utilities Board] comes up with interesting methods like NEWater." (Mr. Low Zhan Hong, 25 January 2013)

Interviewees who echo state discourse of ecological modernization also believe that through technology and innovative means, people would be able to incrementally allow for change and achieve environmental sustainability. This view is not shared by most other youths and NGO interviewees, who often speak of 'excessive' economic growth and the 'limits' that should be in place. These interviewees tend to take a more Treadmill of Production (ToP) stance towards defining the root causes of environmental problems.

However, two of the NGO leaders and a smaller number of the youth respondents criticized the logic of capitalism. Miss Gladys Chua, a youth who previously worked as a community outreach officer for the NGO Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (ACRES) and a volunteer in many other environmental NGOs, mentioned that the idea of increased production and consumption has been driving the Earth towards a limit. She says,

> "This [capitalist] system is causing the problem. But we're trapped in this system and we can try to do little things to amount to a collective effort. But in this system, whatever we do will be offset by the trade and bilateral ties." (1 February 2013)

This resonates with many youths' displeasure towards the consumption patterns in society and in Singapore.

The ToP explanation towards the drain on resource limits and overflowing of sinks through over-production and over-consumption (Schnaiberg et al. 2002), are salient in the responses provided by these youths. Such patterns are described by interviewees as a materialist Singaporean mind-set.

In the interviews, we also asked for their opinions towards the general Singaporean mind-set towards the environment and what are presenting barriers to achieving environmental sustainability. The answers are centred around the idea of protected, selfish Singaporean individuals, blasé and unwilling to inconvenience themselves for others. Mr. Yuen Sai Kuan of the National Climate Change Secretariat called it a "mind-set of inconvenience". Miss Olivia Choong, co-founder of Green Drinks Singapore, an NGO that focuses on knowledge sharing and discussions, describes consumption patterns as a numbing tool, a means of obscuring the real problems in society and the environment by buying more to make up for what Singaporeans are unable to buy in a fast-paced competitive environment i.e., happiness, that eventually results in a blasé attitude.

> "The problem is we are always wanting what is easy and convenient and we forget about what it means to be responsible in our consumption. And I think that's because consumerism is just another way for us to escape our problems. And in doing so, we end up destroying our own environment." (Miss Olivia Choong, 24 January 2013)

Other interviewees attributed such an attitude to the "bubble" that Singaporeans are living in, that protect but also blind us from the realities of environmental degradation.

"I think I only cared more because I see first-hand how my actions indirectly or even directly affect [people]. I think the problem is that Singaporeans are very comfortable, they live in a greenhouse...in a bubble." (Miss Tan Jia Yi, 21 January 2013)

"We need to reconnect the people with nature, promote interaction with our natural surroundings and educate them on our rich biodiversity. And that's what [Nature Society Singapore] tries to do." (Mr. Tan Hang Chong, Honorary General Secretary of NGO Nature Society Singapore, 3 February 2013)

It should be noted that the common discourse by many of the respondents (17 out of 20) is towards relegating the responsibility and hence blame to the individual unit and Singaporeans' attitudes. This theme will be further elaborated on in a later section on individuals and community. However, one youth, Miss Pui Cui Fen presented a counter-discourse, saying that, "We don't go out and spend time in nature. Because the government says we have no natural resources." The underlying assumption of this statement is that the well-disseminated government rhetoric of Singapore lacking natural resources and having only human resources, has implicitly and as an unintended consequence, given a false idea that Singapore exists as an urban city sprawl without not just natural resources but also without nature. However, Miss Cui Fen cited examples of Singapore's pockets of rich biodiversity that Singaporeans are generally unaware of and thus explaining their lack of nature-interaction as not merely a personal preference or result of urbanization but from being misinformed.

"[. . .] we do have a lot of islands around and areas where we have rich local biodiversity. [. . .] It's not true that we do not have natural resources. We just aren't aware of it, so we are actually not doing enough to preserve this biodiversity. [. . .] It is definitely helpful is Singaporeans learn more about our environment by engaging with the local biodiversity." (Miss Pui Cui Fen, 6 February 2013)

The frequent expounding of Singapore's lack of natural resources without realizing the underlying implications of this rhetoric is reflective of eco-governmentality. And yet, it appears that there may be unintended consequences arising from such a rhetoric presented as a 'truth-claim'. At the same time, it is crucial to look at the counter-discourses that exist at the ground-level and see that the perceptions towards environmentalism are not entirely informed by the state's dominant discourse.

It is interesting to note that results show that respondents may sometimes have contradictory claims coming from both the EMT and NEP camps, which points to the changing nature of their subjective positioning within the various discourses available. Just as Agrawal and Bauer (2005) emphasized in their work, the fluid subjectivity further highlights the need to study the experiences and narratives of the actors in order to determine how they make sense of their own position and hence the drivers of their actions.

5.2. Ground-Up, Not Top-Down

The data from all respondents unanimously support the idea of a ground-up approach to the environment, instead of top-down governance. However, the concept of ground-up differs, showing three main concepts within various discourses. While ground-up approach is generally understood by the lay-person as having the common people and citizenry effect change instead of by the state, government and agencies, the following data will show that even this concept has contested elements.

As in Table 2, the different ground-up approaches can be commonly shared among the different groups. There are certainly key features of ground-up approach shared by the three social groups. The interview data shows that these include the idea that top-down is 'not enough' to create a big enough change, that ground-up approach allows for 'larger scale' community involvement, allows 'quicker mobilization' against environmental problems and that everyone has a responsibility and 'a part to play'. The different expectations and concepts of the various parties could lead to misunderstanding or present obstacles towards partnership.

Table 2. Different discourses for Ground-up approach.

Ground-up Approach		
'Bringing on board'	'Challenging the top'	'More popular'
State	NGOs (2) Youths (5)	NGOs (3) Youths (12)

The state discourse of ground-up approach follows the logic of 'elevating' the status of the ground to the top. In the interview, Mr. Yuen Sai Kuan summarized the state ideals of bottom-up as

> "What has changed over the years is that it has moved from top down communication, from government to people, to *bringing people on board to work with us to spread the message*. From our perspective, we consider this a multiplier effect. ... If we are able to plug in to *segments of society who can then act as our voices* in turn to reach out to their own constituents, or to their own networks, this helps us to broaden our message, widen our message." (Italics ours) (30 January 2013)

This finding is best represented by the two italicized phrases. They elucidate the state expectations of ground-up approach, particularly through the system of 'bringing on board'. The phrase suggests that the state intends for those at the ground to join them and work in a manner that *embraces* state ideals. In addition, the ground is looked upon as additional branches to state apparatus in spreading the state's message and agenda. There are two presuppositions underlying this statement; first that the state's environmental discourse is a 'truth' and is the 'correct' path to take and second that the ground would necessarily share the same message and agree to spread it. Needless to say, this concept would present no issues on a national scale if it was shared among the different stakeholders. However, there appears to be a number of different terms that NGOs and youths associate with ground-up approaches, which have been presented in Table 3.

Table 3. NGOs and youths' terms associated with top-down and bottom-up.

Non-Governmental Organizations		Youths	
Top-down	Bottom-up	Top-down	Bottom-up
Not transparent (3) Don't really care (3) Just for show (4) Stalemate (4)	Challenge (2) Communication (3)	Stagnant (10) Slow (12) Restricted (13) Boring (7)	Challenge (11) Different (8) Communication (13)

The notion of top-down from the NGOs exhibits a similar tension that some scholars have come to associate with the civil society in Singapore. The interview data reflects the NGO leaders' dissatisfaction with state inefficiency. Unlike the state, environmental advocacy is not viewed starting from a single centre that expands to surrounding people but rather as different pockets of environmentalism with different causes and interests. This arises from their understanding of the varying interests of NGOs and thus they take a more pluralistic stance towards bottom up approach. According to Koh and Soon (2012), "Singapore's civil society is used to the vertical civil society-to-state relationship where civil society activists, with some general consensus on a public interest issue, mount their advocacy towards the government." The landscape for civil society organizations in Singapore is perhaps still in progress towards maturity and hence may require more time for common ground to be developed between NGOs and the state. Ideally, horizontal civil society-to-state relations would allow for closer partnership and cooperation in the future (Koh and Soon 2012).

However, we note that through the interview process for youths, top-down is not always talked about in terms of governance but also the industry. This is especially apparent for youths who have

participated in state-led or both state and NGO activities, in contrast to those who are largely involved with NGOs and who have discourses similar to the NGO leaders. Instead of the popular neo-liberal theory proposed in that the government is working together with the corporations to perpetuate unequal social relations (Harvey 2005), these youths showed a more sympathetic view towards the state. One discourse, as shared by a number of other youths, follows the rhetoric of the Singapore government's first priority as the economy.

> "Against the corporations...It should be a ground-up approach rather than top-down. Because, the government will not do it. But from the grounds, there are people constantly reminding...in terms of Singapore, environment is definitely not the government's first concern." (Miss Candice Neo, National Climate Change Competition NTU winning team, 18 January 2013)

In context, the statement presents the state's stalemate when dealing with corporations, showing the state as essentially powerless against corporations' desires and interests and are hence dependent on ground-up. Miss Tan Jia Yi also cited,

> "Through the competition, I realized that our government is actually very concerned about this issue."

> "I feel there's a limit to what the government can do. They can do policies they can do changes in infrastructure but, it's up to the people to actually utilize them and follow these policies and really care about the issue."

> "But *government-wise it's hard to clamp down on corporations and businesses* because you know that for Singapore we have a very big oil refinery business." (Italics ours) (21 January 2013)

Youths who have been involved in the technologies of state-led environmental programs, activities and competitions, appear to form an understanding of the state as a victim in the schema of capitalism. They also accord more power to the citizenry in terms of personal and political freedom in terms of negotiating their own social actions. They are also willing to challenge the state and speak up about their displeasure. Yet, for the majority, their discourse of challenging the top policies differs from the NGOs' in that their concept of 'insufficient' state policies were due to the constraints the government faced in controlling the corporations when considering the economic welfare of Singapore.

In addition, both NGO leaders and youths talk about ground-up approach in the essence of providing alternative, different solutions to the environmental problems. To them, ground-up represents a chance for a more innovative voice and coming up with a more visionary plan towards environmental wellbeing but do not really have concrete ideas of participation in environmental policy reform. Also, some interviewees have cited the increasing tension between citizens and the state, such that Singaporeans may 'shut-off' or reject the state message for the sake of opposing the top.

5.3. Pervasiveness of Power/Knowledge

Despite different elements in the discourse, it is apparent that eco-governmentality principles exist, especially in the form of a strict, specific regime of training through the competitions and programs that youths are involved in. This gives them certain knowledge and information without which they would face constraints in participating more fully. Respondents, who took part in state-led environmental activities, speak of the wealth of knowledge they gained from the programs that they claim they would be unable to attain elsewhere. Furthermore, they emphasize that the knowledge is instrumental to their ability to engage in more effective environmental action. These barriers to expertise that public participation is dependent on is characteristic of eco-governmentality (Rose 1999).

Through these interviews, we have found that youths situated between both the state and NGOs have a shared discourse with elements both from the more anti-materialistic and relative radicalism

of the NGOs (Buttel 2004) and also the state discourse on the ground cooperating with the state in spreading the same message. While this may seem contradictory at first, the discursive analysis shows the concept of a shared common goal among state and citizenry, while there exists another enemy in the framework, namely big polluting corporations. Here, we will also show that there are indeed commonalities in the state, NGOs and youths' attitude towards corporations and their environmentally-unfriendly practices. Mr. Yuen Sai Kuan mentioned in the interview that in April 2013, Singapore will be having new legislation to get companies to be "more mindful of the impact they have on the government", under an Energy Conservation Act. Also towards environmental and sustainability reporting for all companies, he states

> "Hopefully there will be proliferation and sufficient critical mass. So once more companies are on board, it will give us the impetus to make it to compulsory. Because if we force now, I think it'll be difficult to get the change...but if there's sufficient groundswell before government makes that leap it will work better." (30 January 2013)

Through these statements, it is indeed evident that the state has to consider the economic interests of the nation through the corporation investments and yet at the same time, they are not powerless in implementing the necessary policies to control corporation practices. As in the next section, both youths and NGOs look to the state to implement certain policies to curb more environmentally-unfriendly practices of corporations. However, the interview data reveals a possibly inaccurate understanding of the state's channels, boundaries and constraints in achieving this. Thus, the idea of a collaborative effort for the top and the ground has to be matched with clear communication between the state and its people.

Furthermore, Foucault's (1982) concept of power/knowledge becomes evident in the interviewees' emphasis on solutions via technological innovations (to be produced by youths) and expertise on environmental knowledge in order to negotiate 'viable, feasible solutions'. While youths are generally optimistic towards their innovative and creative methods of spreading the message, they are also aware of the difficulty of achieving ground-up policy intervention. The interview data shows that most youths do not place much emphasis on EMT's technological and scientific innovation as solutions to environmental problems but rather, their responses when prompted show a strong leaning towards environmental policy reform to more strictly govern human environmental practices. Joyce Chee, a Bayer Youth Environmental Envoy Singapore delegate and Chairperson of the volunteer wing of ECO Singapore, makes sense of her own self-expectations as a youth, such as attaining proper educational qualifications and a respected position in the environmental field.

> "The government is very strict about [policy reform] ...In Singapore you need to have a good education and position in society. Then you can have those with authority to come and sit and talk about it. That I feel is the only way to make things work. We are having all these environmental problems because the corporate, they don't care! We can't just bottom up, sometimes you can't overlook the power, the authority and the social status." (5 February 2013)

While both NGOs and the state construct an image of youths as agents of change with both freedom and capacity for action, many youths see a limit to their capacity for change, often citing a need for 'real power' and showing frustration at their inability to carry out exactly what they hope to, especially in policy reformation. As Wong's article proposes, there is the need for a move towards allowing civil society to engage in environmental policy making and reformation, though it has yet to begin (Wong 2012).

5.4. Stakeholders and Their Expectations

Thus far, the discursive analysis of the different stakeholders' narratives elucidates their perceptions towards the current environmental landscape and situation, as well as making sense

of their different stances on solutions through ground-up approach. In answering the research question on possible solutions, it is also essential to study the expectations that different stakeholders have of one another in establishing environmental sustainability in Singapore.

Table 4 is indicative of different expectations but is in no way a fully comprehensive representation of the three social groups. In this paper, we will highlight in particular the counter-discourses the state faces in terms of its lack of certain environmental policies and how it negotiates these expectations. It is interesting to discover that throughout the interviews, all the youths and NGO leaders have in one way or another, brought up the topic of the environmental policies that have been implemented in other nations and states. Commonly cited examples include Japan, Germany and Switzerland and in particular the case of 'recycling bins and waste separation for houses', as well as installation of solar panels. Indeed, Mr. Yuen Sai Kuan mentioned both examples as well, stating that both are common misconceptions that the state is aware citizens have and that NCCS intends to clear such misconceptions. His explanation for recycling was; the unique waste system of HDB flats in Singapore and the lack of strong community spirit, sacrifice and close collaboration with the trash collectors for a softer approach than hard legislation. It is apparent from the data that even within the community of environmentally-active individuals, this knowledge/information is not being effectively transmitted, further emphasizing the need for clear communication channels.

Table 4. Stakeholders' expectations of one another.

Expectations	By Youths	By NGOs	By State
Of Youths	Innovation and creativity in spreading environmental awareness		
	Changing consumption patterns	Joining NGO leaders in the future	Joining public workforce for environmental agencies
Of NGOs	Providing a platform for alternative voices and community action and being more visible.	Fight for environmental causes, nurture youths, spread awareness and collaborate with state.	Spreading awareness, collaborative action with state
Of State	Clamping down on corporations and implement more environmental policies.		Implementing 3Ps, adaptation and mitigation policies and clarify Singapore's situation.
	Providing education to spread awareness.	Considering alternative environmental policies.	
Of Corporations	Implement corporate social responsibility (CSR)		
	Reduce production and pollution.		Sustainable use of resources, pollute less.

The last point makes us cognizant of the state's move towards self-governance. This is also mentioned by Wong (2012), in that the Singapore state is choosing to take a softer approach instead of directly imposing top-down ideas. The following statement by Mr. Yuen Sai Kuan may help to delineate the new state direction,

> "Because how many policemen [and] enforcement officers do you need, to make sure the system, the place is clean, or people don't pollute. So, there's this move towards self-police, the community self-policing. In some areas, it has worked better than others. But it's something we want to continue. It's a social experiment we want to continue for a longer time." (30 January 2013)

Certainly, the eco-governmentality principles are present in this statement, promoting self-governance and self-conduct. According to Foucault et al. (1988), self-governance reduces the legislative measure required and consequences of political dissent in ensuring that people adhere to the dominant discourse. Though this has yet to be achieved, it is important to explicate the meanings

behind eco-governmentality, as an extension of the concept of governmentality that arguably is the goal of many nation's states in establishing efficient governance. Power acts through the relations between state and community as well as within the community, regulating behaviour through disciplined bodies (Goldman 2001), insofar as the state is able to construct ecological modes of conduct for its citizenry and represent them as rational modes of conduct. If nature as a social construct becomes synonymous with the natural law of a responsible citizen's behaviour in environmentalism, biopolitics as expressed by Foucault could be achieved through the people's eco-self-governance (Luke 1995).

5.5. The Discourse of Individualised Responsibility

In line with notions of self-governance, interviewees unanimously framed their concept of environmental solutions at the level of the individual. "In the end it's about the individual." Surprisingly, this line has been reiterated over and over throughout the interviews. By deconstructing this concept, the heart of this statement lies in the individualization of responsibility and blame. As Eden (1993) noted, there is a discourse on individual environmental responsibility that shapes the behaviour of the individuals in showing themselves as social and environmentally responsible citizens in juxtaposition to irresponsible individuals. Individualizing environmental responsibilities obscures the dynamics of social interpretation and solutions towards environmental problems. This also constructs certain prescribed set of modes of conduct for the individual that makes 'truth-claims' about representing the common interests. However, the plurality of individuals in civil society, in their differing classes, statuses and group memberships, etc., would inform their interests and thus their interpretation of modes of conduct differently (Rosenblum and Post 2002). This situation reveals an orientation towards a single, collective identity of an environmentally responsible citizen, imposed on each individual regardless of the complex interplay of social factors and their different social characteristics and situations in life. As such, contradictions exist where interviewees talk about the 'stubbornness' of middle-aged or elderly citizens and the difficulty in convincing them to share in environmental advocacy and action. Many interviewees describe their interaction and process of convincing the middle-aged and elderly as talking 'economic sense', such as telling them to save on energy in order to cut down on electricity bills. The reasons they cite are that these groups of people are 'unable to understand' the more abstract environmental principles.

While they generally attribute the 'uncooperative' attitude of the older generation to their upbringing and economic situation in post-independence Singapore, many of the interviewees also mention how entering the workforce may cause active individuals to stop caring about the environment over earning a salary or starting a family, in other words, pro-economic concerns. The latter is a particular agenda the state has pushed for, as a pro-economy policy by producing abled, working bodies for the nation (Sun 2012). The general public assumption leans towards the notion that starting families in Singapore is a notable drain on an individual's resource and energy and often resulting in a large increase in expenses.

> "I think for a lot of people, once you start working or when you have a family you won't have any time or energy to do anything else. If you have children you have to work even harder to pay for everything they need. [. . .] That's why a lot of the older generation can no longer bring themselves to care for the environment." (Miss Candice Neo, 18 January 2013)

Hence, their accounts suggest that indeed 'generation' is not the sole cause. Understanding is less of a matter than the lack of motivation to participate in environmental action. It is important to historically situate the different generations of people but at the same time, the social realities at the different stages of life in Singapore should be examined to explicate the changes in situations that are not conducive to environmentalism. Instead of focusing on the 'uncooperative' individual, it is paramount to study the multiple social situations of various groups of people in order to find the solution to actively engage these groups of people.

Furthermore, it reduces the dynamics of collaborative action, as it is seen to be a gathering of individuals instead of various interpretations by multiple, plural groups. The crux of Sociology is not to disregard the social relations and interactions that could affect the conduct or behaviour of individuals and even groups of individuals. To relegate environmental responsibility to the individual level is to break down these necessary ingredients that are paramount in allowing an individual to perform those responsibilities. After all, recent literature has shown that personal responsibility can be better achieved where social structures work to create a suitable field for individual action, particularly in the medical ethics field (Resnik 2007). We stress that this does not mean that individual responsibility is not a basic building block to environmental advocacy for it is certainly vital. However, a reductionist perspective claiming that such responsibility is 'down to the individual' may serve to reduce a deep understanding of social and environmental complexity and through that, the power of community action. Thus, the downplaying of social group understanding and responsibility in the discourses of most of the interviewees should be re-examined to go hand-in-hand with individual responsibility. As Miss Olivia Choong described the concept of community,

> "[Now] could be a time when people come in and have different viewpoints. On the same level, having a bunch of different people analyse and come up with what's the best and what's agreeable. And more importantly, how to make it effective...a community." (24 January 2013)

6. Conclusions

6.1. Transcending the Dichotomy

We argue in this paper that it is important to study the discursive contents of state and NGOs conceptions of environmentalism and the network they are situated within. This is to further deepen the understanding of state-society relations and the channels for bottom-up approaches and environmental policy reform.

It is clear that the state retains its publicly apparent preference for ecological modernization policies. Despite civil society leaning towards the New Ecological paradigm, there is still a considerable amount of overlap in the discourses of both state and society. The impact of dominant state discourses on the people is evident in the self-policing of NGOs and youth within their own meaning-making. Notions such as individualized responsibility discussed within the results section, is an effect of state discourse which has been clearly internalized by the youths as well. More importantly, despite any disagreement with state policies or differing opinions about the direction of environmental sustainability in the country, the majority of respondents will provide a counter-argument to their own pro-civil society opinions with a justification that is supportive of state discourse. This is salient in the respondents' notion that while the state is not entirely well-suited to solving Singapore's environmental concerns, they contrarily provide overt recognition of effective top-down governance across other spheres of their lives.

In situating youths beyond the state and the NGOs, we may conceive of a continuum of various perspectives that through the overlapping memberships over the three groups, is unlikely to be immutable. In fact, the interview data has shown the youths to be more often than not, sympathetic to both the state and NGOs' situations. Youths can possibly act as a bridge over the tensions of state-civil society relations to allow for better collaborative action. However, at the same time, this could result in the reinforcement of existing top-down power relations. The data also suggests that due to eco-governmentality and self-regulation, the 'investment' of NGOs and government in the youths may not result in as many benefits as intended if clearer communication channels are not set-up. The youths face barriers to accomplishing their environmental goals and as the data shows, most of the youths and some though not all, of the NGO leaders believe it their duty to make change, hence desiring more power/knowledge. The interview data also suggests that the tendency of youths to take on subjective positioning within the state-society dichotomy prevents them from accepting a more fluid

role beyond the organizational boundaries and formal channels presented to them. There is therefore, more potential that could be reached in terms of the innovative networks and movements as suggested by Costanza-Chock (2012) and the United Nations (2003).

The study ultimately points to the indispensability of effective communication channels, as the mismatch of expectations of each social actor by the others can lead to dissent and more instability towards cooperation within the environmental community. Many youths show frustration and confusion when talking about the lack of information and communication. Thus, our research further supports the empirical findings of Koh and Ling (2004), whereby the lack of effective communication channels is the greatest obstacle to effective cooperation with the government. Perhaps in a more lucid example, 17 out of 20 respondents specifically thanked us for allowing them to voice, self-validate and reaffirm their stance and rationale for being environmental advocates. While not presented directly as interview data, the observations we made during the research has made us cognizant of the affirming benefits that communication within the environmental community can provide. In a more idealistic vein, we suggest that bottom-up and top-down approaches could be transcended if the different stakeholders break down the barriers of communication to establish an environmental community that is characterized by horizontal, lateral relations, with different roles and sometimes contesting interests but similar stakes in the welfare of the environment.

6.2. Limitations and Impetus for Further Research

Our research has not taken into account the personal voice of the corporations, which however is arguably at the present, the most powerful player in the current environmental discourses. Thus, there is impetus for further research to situate the corporations within the Singapore network of different social actors in environmentalism. In addition, the corporation voice in Singapore is unlikely to be the same as other countries, especially Western countries, due to the particular and unique nature of the nation (Wong 2012).

Due to the time constraints, our research only covered the responses of 20 interviewees and while that may be indicative, it is certainly not representative of the state-civil society discourses and relations, Hence, far more empirical research needs to be carried out for a greater breadth of in-depth data. At the same time, just as NGOs are understood to be non-homogeneous, we should also consider the non-homogeneity of the Singapore state, in its different sectors and different environmental agencies. Our interview with state official Mr Yuen has made us cognizant that the Singapore state is not as coherent as some of the previous literature have presented and further research can be done to see if the Singapore state is suitable to be situated in a more heterogeneous space. These complexities that we have not addressed in our paper may aid in providing a comprehensive view of the landscape of environmentalism in Singapore.

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