The Geography of Climate Change Litigation: Implications for Transnational Regulatory Governance

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THE GEOGRAPHY OF CLIMATE CHANGE LITIGATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR TRANSNATIONAL REGULATORY GOVERNANCE

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ABSTRACT

This Article aims to forward the dialogue about transnational regulatory governance through a law and geography analysis of climate change litigation. Part II begins by considering fundamental barriers to responsible transnational energy production. Part III proposes a place-based approach to dissecting climate change litigation and a model for understanding its spatial implications. Parts IV through VI map representative examples of climate change litigation in subnational, national, and supranational fora. The Article concludes by exploring the normative implications of this descriptive geography; it engages the intersection of international law, international relations, and geography as a jumping-off point for a companion article.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In December 2005, Sheila Watt-Cloutier with the support of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference filed a petition with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights against the United States claiming that its climate change policy violates the Inuit’s human rights.1 The petition argues that despite U.S. responsibility for a substantial percentage of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions, it has failed to develop adequate policies to limit its emissions.2

The problems that this petition addresses are well documented. The recently released report of the key findings of the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment details the rapidity and severity of climate change in the


2. Inuit Petition, supra note 1.
region, average temperature increases, for example, are at almost twice the global rate. The impacts on the Inuit from the environmental changes include threats to homes from storms and melting permafrost, to livelihood from changes in animal populations, to life from thinning ice that makes traditional travel routes more dangerous, and to culture from the combination of these and other changes with increased navigation through major marine routes.

A geography of the actors in this case is dizzying. The Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) is a regional organization representing Inuit peoples who live in the Arctic, an area which cross-cuts several existing national borders. The Inuit represented by the ICC have multiscalar ties to place, ranging from their local communities to regional and international organizations and governmental bodies. The respondent is a large nation-state, the United States, but many of the criticized greenhouse gas emissions emanate from corporations with ties to particular U.S. states, as well as to several other nation-states. The adjudicator is the Inter-American Commission, which is a regional body composed of individuals from several nation-states—partly overlapping with the Arctic nation-states—acting in a regional capacity. Claims to the Commission draw from regional human rights law, which this petition applies to circumstances that connect geographically disparate localities—the ones in which emissions occur and the ones in which the climate change impacts are experienced—due to a process that occurs in the atmosphere around the globe.

This Article analyzes the Inuit petition and other examples of climate change litigation from a law and geography perspective, with the aim of understanding their implications for transnational regulatory governance.

4. Id. at 8.
5. Id. at 16–17.
7. For a more in-depth discussion of the actors in the case, see infra Part VI.B.1.
8. This Article is the second in a series exploring characterization issues that occur at international environmental intersections. The first article, Hari M. Osofsky, Learning from Environmental Justice: A New Model for International Environmental Rights, 24 STAN. ENVTL. L.J. 71 (2005), developed a model and applied it to a series of case studies in order to propose a more systematic approach to international environmental rights advocacy. My observation of the state-corporate regulatory dynamic in those cases provided the inspiration for this Article. After completing a companion piece that explores the normative implications of the geography of climate change
This type of litigation provides a particularly interesting example of adjudication to address energy production’s externalities because it engages multiscalar contributions to a supranational atmospheric process that causes multiscalar impacts over time. The movement from local to global to local through various governmental regulatory structures infuses the relationships among those contributing to and suffering from climate change with an unusual richness. Moreover, those impacted by climate change have brought actions in a wide range of judicial fora, which allows for comparative analysis of tribunals’ approaches to these multilayered situations.

Although the existing scholarly literature analyzes international regulation of corporations in general, and climate change and environmental rights litigation in particular, these discussions focus on firm regulation rather than the litigation, I plan to focus future articles in the series on the intersections of trade and the environment, natural disaster and the environment, and armed conflict and the environment.

9. This Article focuses predominantly on the externality of climate change and its impacts. Some of the cases it analyzes, however, focus on other externalities as well. For example, the Nigerian gas flaring case also engages the health impacts of the toxins being released. See infra note 65.


primarily on specific litigative or regulatory approaches as tools for achieving corporate responsibility. To the extent that state sovereignty and authority are analyzed in the context of multinational corporate responsibility, pieces tend to debate their limitations in light of the growth of non-state-based actors and regulatory mechanisms.

This piece builds upon that literature by arguing that climate change litigation represents a modified Westphalian geography, in which the nation-state still plays a core role but must navigate a three-dimensional spatial terrain. An analysis of individual subnational, national, and supranational cases provides a nuanced demonstration of the multiscalar places and spaces that this geography entails, and provides a basis for

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13. See sources cited supra notes 10–12.

14. See supra note 10 and accompanying text; infra note 27 and accompanying text. For further law and geography perspectives, see sources cited infra note 40.

15. See infra note 81 and accompanying text.

16. These terms are used in a variety of contexts in the scholarly literature, often with variant meanings as their core focus. Compare David Harvey, Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography 369 (2001) (using conceptions of space to engage movement of capital as part of a Marxist critique) with Alexander B. Murphy, The Sovereign State System as Political-Territorial Ideal: Historical and Contemporary Considerations, in STATE SOVEREIGNTY AS SOCIAL CONTRACT 81, 107 (Thomas J. Biersteker & Cynthia Weber eds., 1996) (providing a discussion of the spatial structure of the international economy that includes financial and business networks, as well as legal structures). For a thoughtful analysis of the need to reengage the concept of space in our globalizing world, see Doreen Massey, For Space (2005). In this piece, I am primarily focused on legal spaces, although I acknowledge the broader spatial context in which legal spaces evolve:

Our legal lives are constituted by shifting intersections of different and not necessarily coherently articulating legal orders associated with different scalar spaces. The relations between these different legal spaces is a dynamic and complex one, but it is a pressing and important subject of inquiry given the ways in which the codes operative at various scales intermingle.

David Delaney, Richard T. Ford & Nicholas Blomley, Preface: Where is Law?, in THE LEGAL GEOGRAPHIES READER xiii, xxi (Nicholas Blomley, David Delany & Richard T. Ford eds., 2001). To that end, in this Article, I am using “place” to connote ties to particular geographic locations, “scale” to engage the applicable level of governance (e.g., subnational, national, supranational), and “space” to describe socio-political and legal structures.

17. Some scholars have argued that geographic ties are becoming less important in the face of
further reflections on transnational regulatory governance. This Article’s approach is thus primarily descriptive, but its final parts introduce a normative inquiry that will form the basis for a future companion article.

Part II begins by exploring the foundational challenges to effective regulation of the energy industry’s externalities. Part III proposes a place-based approach to dissecting climate change litigation and a model for understanding its spatial implications. Parts IV through VI apply this model to specific case examples of litigation regarding global climate change occurring in subnational, national, and supranational regional and international fora. Part VII begins an engagement of the normative implications of this terrain, situating it at the intersection of international law, international relations, and geography. The Article concludes by arguing that effective transnational regulation requires an engagement of this geography and suggesting next steps for this inquiry.

II. CHALLENGES TO RESPONSIBLE TRANSNATIONAL ENERGY PRODUCTION

The vast majority of greenhouse gas emissions are caused by energy-related activities. This Part provides the context in which climate change litigation is occurring by exploring foundational challenges to responsible transnational energy production. First, the structure of the energy production process reinforces the creation of numerous social and environmental externalities. Second, the corporations which produce and use the energy have an uncertain status in the international legal system. Finally, the multiscalar nature of the industry creates overlapping regulatory authority.

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A. Nature of the Transnational Energy Production Process

The first challenge stems from the nature of the energy production process, which has multiscalar ties to place. Energy resources are extracted from a particular locality by corporate entities that may represent multiple nationalities, under the supervision of subnational and national regulatory agencies.\textsuperscript{19}

This structure provides for complex interactions among entities that occupy variant and overlapping geopolitical spaces. Corporations wield economic clout, each level of government relies upon its sovereign regulatory authority, and the impacted populations assert legal rights and grassroots political influence. These power relationships produce problematic patterns: Governments chronically underenforce environmental standards, and the structure of resource extraction often enmeshes corporations with armed conflict or with dictatorial regimes that commit human rights violations.\textsuperscript{20}

Moreover, the foundational structural complexities are reinforced by the socioeconomic realities of the modern energy industry. The supply of nonrenewable energy sources continues to drop,\textsuperscript{21} the production process and usage of the final products result in significant environmental and...
societal externalities, and the burdens and benefits of the industry are inequitably divided. Each of these issues sows the seeds for conflict not only among the key actors in a particular venture, but also among the many entities that intersect with the energy production process globally.

As the above description illustrates, the state-corporate regulatory relationship infuses each of these dilemmas. Because corporations directly extract and process the raw materials to produce energy, many of the externalities result directly from their choices. Corporations operate under the auspices of nation-state and sub-state governments, however, and as a result, regulatory failures also play a crucial role in conflicts and in resulting environmental degradation, including greenhouse gas emissions.

B. Corporations in the International Legal System

These energy-specific challenges occur against a backdrop of broader uncertainty over what space corporations should occupy in the international system, which poses a second barrier to fostering corporate responsibility in the energy sector. In a formal legal analysis, states appear to be the dominant actors in the international system. The processes of both treaty and customary international law creation rest on the consent of


24. See KLARE, supra note 20 (describing the resultant resource wars); Dufresne, supra note 19 (describing the ensuing internal conflicts).
sovereign states.25 The very existence of corporations—and the ability to bind them—similarly emanates from state (and sometimes sub-state) authority.26

This simple model revolving around the nation-state is challenged by numerous conceptual approaches that acknowledge the complex relational structures that underlie the transnational legal system.27 Whatever theoretical version one chooses, the political and financial clout of non-state actors and their interactions with governmental actors complicate the regulatory picture.28 Corporations often have immense resources—Shell Oil, for example, despite its failures in finding new oil fields, had a record

25. For an overview of state sovereignty and its role in the international legal system, see IAN BROWNLIE, PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC INTERNATIONAL LAW 289–99 (5th ed. 1998); see also THE FLUID STATE: INTERNATIONAL LAW AND NATIONAL LEGAL SYSTEMS (Hilary Charlesworth et al. eds., 2005) (exploring the contours of the relationships among domestic and international legal systems); Becky Mansfield, Beyond Rescaling: Reintegrating the ‘National’ as a Dimension of Scalar Relations, 29 PROGRESS IN HUMAN GEOGRAPHY 458 (2005) (arguing for the importance of engaging the role of the national); Murphy, supra note 16 (placing state sovereignty’s current status in historical context); Keith Aoki, (Intellectual) Property and Sovereignty: Notes Toward a Cultural Geography of Authorship, 48 STAN. L. REV. 1293, 1318–19 (1996) (exploring intellectual property legal developments within evolving conceptions of state sovereignty); Antonio F. Perez, Review Essay, Who Killed Sovereignty? Or: Changing Norms Concerning Sovereignty in International Law, 14 WIS. INT’L L. J. 463 (1996) (providing an analysis of how the Westphalian model of state sovereignty has evolved). I have previously analyzed the role of varying sovereignty regimes in the regulation of international environmental justice problems. See Osofsky, supra note 8, at 80–86.


28. See Deva, supra note 10 (exploring the limits of current regulatory regimes).
2004 net income of $18.5 billion—\(^{29}\) that allow them substantial influence over the process of law creation.\(^{30}\) Nongovernmental organizations’ involvement in norm creation and the resulting accountability concerns also have been well-documented.\(^{31}\) As a result of the disconnect between non-state actors’ formal roles and actual level of involvement, substantial debate has occurred over basic questions, such as: (1) What obligations do corporations actually have under international law? (2) What mechanisms exist to create compliance with those obligations? (3) How effective are those mechanisms and how could they be made more effective?\(^{32}\)

In the context of fostering more environmentally and socially responsible behavior by energy corporations, these questions are complicated by the relational axes detailed in Part III.B.\(^{33}\) Although a consensus has emerged, for example, that corporations have direct obligations to avoid engaging in a limited set of human rights violations, questions—especially at the margin—of when their involvement with a governmental violator is sufficient to trigger liability or whether environmental harm reaches the level of a human rights obligation have


\(^{30}\) For a discussion of the relationship between corporations and the international legal system, see sources cited supra note 10; see also TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS: THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK (A.A. Fatouros ed., 1994); TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS AND NATIONAL LAW (Seymour J. Rubin & Don Wallace, Jr. eds., 1994).


\(^{32}\) The books and articles on corporations and nongovernmental organizations cited supra notes 10, 30 and 31 explore each of these three questions, which I posed to participants when chairing the panel Corporate Compliance with International Law at International Law Weekend–West 2005.

\(^{33}\) See infra Part III.B.
been more controversial. Similarly, because the home and host countries both have regulatory claims regarding transnational energy production, issues arise about which judicial forum and governmental regulators would be most appropriate and effective for achieving compliance. A clear understanding of the state-corporate dynamic in each situation is thus critical to addressing and preventing the problematic behavior.

C. Overlapping Regulatory Regimes

The above-described dilemma of how to locate corporations is compounded by a third challenge, that of addressing the appropriate level at which to regulate them. In the law and economics arena, for example, scholars and policymakers have debated the extent to which the federal government, as opposed to state governments, should be involved in U.S. environmental regulation. Substantial disagreements exist over when market failures occur, what causes them, how environmental harms might be integrated into the cost of production, and what entity should serve as the primary regulator. Both theoretical and empirical accounts have invoked conceptual approaches, such as public choice theory, to argue for radically different outcomes.


35. These issues are explored in the sources cited supra notes 22 and 23.


http://openscholarship.wustl.edu/law_lawreview/vol83/iss6/3
Resolving either that controversy or the value of public choice theory more generally is beyond the scope of this article. An extension of the regulatory debate to the context of the transnational energy industry, however, provides an illustration of the complexities involved. Depending on whether the home or host state was the more appropriate regulator and on the particularities of that state, public choice analyses might dictate a different model of governmental involvement. The background politics; structure of executive, legislative, and judicial power; and types of active non-state actors all impact the internal politics of influence.

Recent literature on environmental regulation has already begun to explore these issues of overlapping regulatory spaces in the broader transnational environmental context. For example, William Buzbee has considered the role of spatial mismatches in over- and under-regulation of environmental externalities. Daniel Esty has engaged related issues by analyzing the way in which emerging technologies create regulatory gaps that require new institutional responses. Climate change litigation fits into this dialogue by manifesting multiscalar, multispatial regulatory dilemmas.

The relationship between state and corporate power manifested in this litigation thus represents a complex geography. The structures of the energy industry and of the transnational regulatory process provide crucial obstacles to addressing problems of corporate responsibility. The Parts that follow propose a strategy for mapping these relationships and then explore the implications of such a map in the context of efforts to address energy’s externalities in judicial and quasi-judicial fora.

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Regulation: A Public Choice Analysis, 115 HARV. L. REV. 553, 555–57 (2001). Public choice analysis has also been considered in the international law-making context. For examples of recent scholarship in this area, see Andrew T. Guzman, Public Choice and International Regulatory Competition, 90 GEO. L.J. 971 (2002) (exploring the implications of public choice theory for international cooperation); John K. Setear, Treaties, Custom, Iteration, and Public Choice, 5 CHI. J. INT’L L. 715 (2005) (comparing iterative and public choice perspectives on whether leaders will choose to rely upon treaties or customary international law, and concluding that the iterative perspective is more persuasive).


III. LOCATING PLACE AND SPACE IN CLIMATE CHANGE LITIGATION

A web of place-based relationships lies at the core of the above account. The actors involved in transnational energy production—from states to corporations to nongovernmental organizations to individuals—identify themselves with at least one bounded geographic entity. The externalities of the production process, such as localized pollution or climate change, involve specific impacts in particular places.

An examination of adjudication regarding these externalities reveals ties between the spaces that structure the cases and specific places. The choice of parties, fora, and substantive law each connect the case or petition to particular localities. Such decisions are rarely neutral, but rather reflect comparative assessments of litigative potential that are tied to place. For example, whether comparisons occur at a subnational, national, or supranational level, some places are perceived as having stronger regulations, more will to enforce their regulations, or a more progressive judiciary than others.39

Furthermore, the process of litigation creates constrained spaces. Individuals and entities are defined as inside or outside of the categories of petitioner, respondent, and adjudicator. Judicial interpretation locates the boundaries of legislatively created statutes and of administrative regulations. These categories mold the power relationships occurring within the confines of a case.

This Part draws from the discipline of geography\(^{40}\) to present a model for unpacking the relationships that drive and limit transnational litigation to achieve socially and environmentally sound approaches to energy production. It argues that mapping adjudicative efforts to force corporate responsibility helps to unravel the complex layers of intertwinement described in Part II. A place-based analysis of actors and claims serves as a crucial tool for revealing the underlying power dynamics in these cases.\(^{41}\) It demonstrates a modified Westphalian geography in which states must navigate overlapping sets of relationships in order to regulate effectively.\(^{42}\)

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\(^{40}\) One of the relevant focuses of the geography literature is on the evolving interrelationship of place, space, and scale. This piece draws from concepts imbedded in both critical human geography and political geography, and particularly focuses on the dynamic between place and space in climate change litigation. For an introduction to critical human geography, see Derek Gregory, \textit{Geographic Imaginations} (1994) (exploring issues of socialization and deep space); Harvey, \textit{supra} note 16 (providing a series of essays in critical geography developed over a period of years); Edward W. Soja, \textit{Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory} (1993) (engaging the critical spatial perspective on social theory and analysis in a series of essays). For an introduction to political geography, see \textit{A Companion to Political Geography} (John Agnew, Katharyne Mitchell & Gerard Toal eds., 2003); John Agnew, \textit{Making Political Geography} (2002); Kevin R. Cox, \textit{Political Geography: Territory, State, and Society} (2002) (providing an overview of political geography); Martin Ira Glassner & Chuck Fairer, \textit{Political Geography} (3d ed. 2004); see also John Agnew, \textit{Geopolitics: Re-Visioning World Politics} (2d ed. 2003) (providing an overview of geopolitics); Saul Bernard Cohen, \textit{Geopolitics of the World System} (2003) (same); Klaus Doidds, \textit{Geopolitics in a Changing World} (2000) (same).


A. Connections to Place

This Part explores the potential value of mapping ties to place in climate change litigation. For each type of actor and component of claims, this analysis provides insights into the underlying spatial categories and how they relate to one another.

1. Geography of Actors

A map of the key actors in litigation to address energy’s externalities reaches beyond a simple discussion of petitioners and respondents. As the deconstruction of individual cases in Parts IV though VI reveals, the structure of litigation requires characterizing similar facts in varying ways to fit applicable laws. Each action focuses on a very narrow account of the problem that includes a specific configuration of relevant parties. For instance, one of the national-level cases addressing the externality of climate change in the United States focuses on the U.S. EPA’s regulatory authority under the Clean Air Act, while another case directly engages corporate pollution as a public nuisance.

By explicitly acknowledging each relevant actor’s relationship to place, this aspect of the inquiry provides a mechanism for understanding the broader context in which adjudication occurs and, in so doing, escapes the structural confines of litigation. This type of understanding is particularly critical in the context of the generation of transnational environmental problems like climate change that represent nontraditional variations on cross-boundary pollution. A geographic understanding of each actor reveals a fuller narrative of the case that exposes boundaries and strategic

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choices. Through this account, the power dynamics infusing the litigation emerge.

a. Petitioners

The mapping of actors begins with an analysis of those initiating the litigative dialogue in most of the case studies: the petitioners who claim to be impacted by the externalities. Some cases contain an apparently straightforward geography of those harmed, by providing a tale of tangible injury in a specific locality. In the situation described in the Introduction, the physical manifestations of climate change in the Arctic have translated into particular impacts on the Inuit. For example, thinning ice makes traditional travel routes more dangerous, and the ongoing changes in animal populations constrains their hunting. The Inuit thus can link the global phenomenon of climate change to localized claims about their lives, livelihoods, and traditional cultural practices. These individual geographies form a complex web. The scope of global climate change means that many parties have a wide range of claims, as represented in the diversity of petitioners in the litigation discussed in Parts IV through VI. A variety of non-state and governmental actors, each based in a particular place, argue that they have both standing and a substantive basis to challenge greenhouse gas emissions. Any given group of petitioners represents a particular subset of those who suffer similar types of harm, and often a variation on their narrative could be retold in a different geographic context; for instance, low-lying island states could make parallel claims to those made by the Inuit.

46. In general, the petitioners are the ones claiming injury from the externalities. One of the subnational cases involves the energy producers as the petitioners, however. In re Quantification of Env'l. Costs, 578 N.W.2d 794, 796–97 (Minn. Ct. App. 1998).

47. See supra notes 3–5 and accompanying text.


b. Respondents

A map of the entities involved in the production process, some of whom serve as respondents in adjudication over externalities, provides a converse image. A particular corporation generally extracts the natural resources and processes them into an energy source. That corporation is located in its place of incorporation, and to some extent, in every locale in which it operates. Because of the distribution of natural resources around the globe, often extraction occurs in a developing country through a partnership between a subsidiary of a multinational corporation and other local entities.

The entities that regulate corporate behavior—from traditional governmental regulatory agencies to those involved in funding the export-import process that allows the flow of goods and capital—are each located in a particular place, and have relationships that extend into other places that provide contrasting socioeconomic and political contexts. They serve as petitioners pushing for greater regulation in some contexts and respondents fighting these efforts to force regulation in others, and regulatory entities at different levels of governance occasionally oppose one another in a lawsuit. For instance, cities are among the petitioners in

50. In one case example, however, the corporations were in the role of petitioners. See supra note 46 and accompanying text.
51. For a discussion of international regulation of transnational corporations, see TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS: THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK, supra note 30 (providing an overview of international legal efforts to regulate corporations); TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS AND NATIONAL LAW, supra note 30 (providing an overview of national law efforts to regulate corporations); see also supra note 10 and accompanying text.
52. The term “developing country” is used as a short-hand in this Article for countries with fewer economic resources that tend to have more nascent or unstable political structures. In the energy production process, there is often a large socioeconomic and political contrast between the parent corporation’s home country and the country in which extraction is occurring. More generally, however, a spectrum of development exists, and countries with very different histories and situations become lumped together by the terms “developed” and “developing.” The boundaries, moreover, are difficult to discern. Although I use the terms “developing country” and “developed country” throughout this paper, I thus acknowledge their limitations.
53. A legal picture of the relationship among the various entities involved in the partnership can become very complex. For example, depending on the relationship between the parent or subsidiary and the various governments involved, difficult sovereign immunity questions may arise. See Melissa Lang & Richard Bales, The Immunity of Foreign Subsidiaries Under the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act, 13 MINN. J. GLOBAL TRADE 353 (2004) (arguing for the appropriateness of a beneficial interest test in this context).
54. I discuss them in this category for convenience, and do not intend to imply that they are always in the role of respondents.
a U.S. suit against federal-level governmental entities providing assistance to overseas ventures.55

As in the context of corporate actors, the divide between developed and developing countries becomes relevant to mapping of governmental bodies. For example, an entity providing political risk insurance may be based in a developed country but funding ventures based in a developing country.56 Moreover, distinctions between levels and branches of government abound, as represented in the wide range of regulators described in the cases of Part IV through Part VI.57

c. Adjudicators

The geography of the entity adjudicating also serves as part of the litigation’s dynamics. Choices among fora almost always exist in the context of transnational energy production due to the above-described structure of the industry. The transnational and multiscalar dimensions of energy production result in substantial ambiguity about which forum is most appropriate.

Strategic forum selection reflects a cyclical process. Potential petitioners weigh the various characteristics of particular fora, but their decision-making is constrained by the options themselves. The amenability of a particular forum reflects a variety of geopolitical and socioeconomic factors beyond the control of the parties.58 The decision does not occur in an idealized Rawlsian world,59 but rather mirrors the factors shaping the fora.

Moreover, even in fora that reflect international standards for judicial independence and the rule of law, the adjudicators are still human beings. Their perspectives and instincts have been honed by their life experiences, which reflect their geography, broadly construed. Who they are is

56. This is the scenario in the German case against Euler Hermes AG. For a description of the case, see Climate Justice, German Government Sued Over Climate Change, http://www.climatelasuit.org/media/german.suit (last visited Feb. 27, 2006).
57. See supra Part IV.
58. The attempts to address the disaster at Bhopal exemplify these dilemmas. For an analysis of the geopolitical and socioeconomic forces making legal redress difficult in its aftermath, see JAMIE CASSELS, THE UNCERTAIN PROMISE OF LAW: LESSONS FROM BHOPAL (1993).
59. John Rawls proposed that a person structuring the social order should operate from behind a veil of ignorance that prevents knowledge of future social status. JOHN RAWLS, A THEORY OF JUSTICE 118–23 (rev. ed. 1999). Not only would such a veil be difficult to construct in our society, but those ordering society almost always do so from a privileged position.
inescapably intertwined with their place in the world, which includes not simply the localities with which they have had significant contact, but also their socioeconomic, political, and educational experiences. Even when judges are consciously acting as neutral adjudicators, they cannot fully divorce themselves from their individually constituted values and approaches to reasoning.  

A place-based approach assists in an analysis of the particular regulatory role an adjudicator has been asked to play with respect to the petitioners and respondents. As described above, petitioners and respondents vary widely in litigation addressing the externalities of energy production. In the climate change cases which serve as the focus for this Article, governmental and nongovernmental entities serve on both sides of the relevant cases and reflect various levels of the regulatory process. Because the fora range from the subnational to the supranational, the dynamic between the adjudicator and the parties varies not only based on the changing structure of the parties, but also based on the changing structure of the fora.

2. Geography of Claims

The geography of claims in these lawsuits similarly goes beyond a detailing of legal arguments. The underlying facts and the application of law to those facts have their own connections to place that inform a deconstruction of power dynamics. For example, in the Victoria, Australia, subnational action involving the Hazelwood Mine and Power Station, the relevant facts involved localized coal burning contributing to a global phenomenon—climate change—which in turn has a multiplicity of local effects around the world.  

The lawsuit successfully relied upon state and national legislation to challenge limitations on the scope of a state-appointed panel inquiry into environmental effects occurring under those laws. A place-based analysis of the claims in this lawsuit, as detailed

60. Several schools of thought, such as legal realism, have explored the impact of this subjectivity. The extent to which socioeconomic context and the qualities of the individual adjudicator matter remains controversial. For a historical discussion of the legal realism movement, see LAURA KALMAN, LEGAL REALISM AT YALE 1927–1960 (1986). For examples of more recent scholarly analysis of legal realism, see Michael Steven Green, Legal Realism as a Theory of Law, 46 WM. & MARY L. REV. 1915 (2005); New Legal Realism Symposium, 2005 WIS. L. REV. 335.

further in Part IV.B.2, further helps to unpack the subnational, national, and supranational elements of the situation and the relationships among them.

Through a focus on the ties to place underlying the factual and legal claims in climate change lawsuits and petitions, this part of the inquiry allows for a more nuanced understanding of the litigation’s substance. As the Hazelwood Mine and Power Station situation exemplifies, facts and legal claims may map somewhat differently from one another and from key actors. An exploration of those differences reveals not only issues of characterization, but also structures of power that shape these struggles over energy production’s externalities.

a. Facts

A map of claims begins with the facts that underlie them. In any case, the legal claims only exist because of events that have occurred and may be continuing to occur. The facts become relevant to a geographic analysis, however, because of the dynamic between place and space that drives the interconnection between law and fact. Place does not simply determine whether a tribunal has and should accept jurisdiction, but also constrains which legal claims can be made. For example, the facts must be tied to the United States in particular ways for U.S. federal environmental law to apply, or to the City of Latrobe in Victoria, Australia, for relevant local, state, and national laws to be at issue in a claim.

The above-described place-based analysis of key actors begins the process of mapping facts, as many of the facts relate directly to petitioners and respondents. But the geography of the facts may be more extensive than the description of the actors provides. For example, a recently filed case in the High Court of Nigeria alleges that gas flaring by oil companies violates constitutional rights and environmental law. The plaintiffs in this lawsuit not only live near the flaring and experience its extensive

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62. See infra Part IV.B.2.
64. For an analysis of the geography of Hazelwood Mine and Power Station case, see infra Part IV.B.
short-range effects, but also are vulnerable to localized environmental changes due to global climate change. As in the Inuit case, however, the Nigerian plaintiffs are only one of the populations experiencing the localized effects of global climate change. These specific facts thus become representative of a broader geography. The links between U.S. and European energy companies, gas flaring in Nigeria, and dangerously thin ice on traditional travel routes in the Arctic begin to emerge through a geographic analysis of the facts in these lawsuits. This approach engages climate change as a phenomenon in which local behavior in one place causes local impacts elsewhere.

b. Substantive Law

The geography of the substantive claims intertwines with that of the facts, but may not be fully contiguous with it. Often the relevant law covers a broader geographic area that includes the area in which the facts are occurring. For example, the petitions to the World Heritage Committee requesting that particular sites impacted by climate change be put on the Committee’s danger list focus on the impacts of climate change in those places. The geographic scope of danger-listing, however, includes more than just those individual places. Similarly, Victoria’s Planning and Environment Act covers the whole region rather than just the City of Latrobe.

A place-based analysis of the substantive claims gives critical insight into the power relations involved. It answers spatial questions about whose regulatory authority is being invoked on what grounds, and in so doing, reveals the levers of executive and legislative authority that undergird these suits. The substantive laws have been created through a particular place’s political process, and were crafted broadly or narrowly through geographically bound entities. In the Minnesota state court case over

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66. Motion Ex parte, supra note 65, Verifying Affidavit; see also THE CLIMATE JUSTICE PROGRAMME & ENVTL. RIGHTS ACTION, GAS FLARING IN NIGERIA: A HUMAN RIGHTS, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC MONSTROSITY (describing the impacts of gas flaring on local communities through exposure to toxins and through resulting climate change).


68. See supra note 5 and accompanying text.

69. See infra Part VI.B.


environmental valuation, for instance, the case hinged on whether the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission was appropriately implementing the state legislature’s will in including carbon dioxide among air pollutants that have a cost value associated with them.\textsuperscript{72}

The court’s approach to the substantive legal claims similarly reflects a place’s tradition of judicial interpretation and receptivity to adjudicators making decisions that constrain externalities. In the Minnesota case, for example, the court deferred to the Commission’s order under a substantial evidence analysis.\textsuperscript{73} In another variation of balancing among branches, the administrative tribunal in the Hazelwood Mine and Power Station case exercised its interpretive authority regarding whether greenhouse gas emissions should be included as part of the category of “environmental effects” in a statute created by Victoria’s legislature.\textsuperscript{74}

The substantive claims also provide insight into the petitioners’ decision-making processes, and so feed into the above analysis of the actors’ geography. Generally, the particular substantive claims filed represent only one potential characterization of the facts. The petitioners’ choice of claim is suggestive not just of strategy, but also of the constraints under which the petitioners operate and through which they view the situation.

c. Procedural Law

While the application of substantive law reveals the way in which places’ power dynamics result in assertions of regulatory authority over particular domains, the applicable procedural law demonstrates a place’s structuring of opportunities among the various actors. Procedure can play a role through statutes that provide particular procedural rights. For example, in the German case against Hermes Euler HG, an export credit agency, the nongovernmental organizations petitioning the court claimed that the federal Environmental Information Act gave them the right to information about the extent to which Hermes provides political and economic risk insurance to projects that produce greenhouse gases.\textsuperscript{75} The nongovernmental actors, which have both national and supranational

\textsuperscript{72} In re Quantification of Envtl. Costs, 578 N.W.2d 794, 796–97 (Minn. Ct. App. 1998).
\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Id.} at 802.
presences, are relying on a law created by the federal legislature for leverage against the credit agency.

Procedure more commonly enters into lawsuits, however, through the rules applicable to a particular forum, which must be complied with in every lawsuit and may be created at multiple levels of government.76 Moreover, procedure is not simply used offensively by petitioners, but is also used defensively by respondents.77 For example, in the case brought against Export-Import Bank and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation for their failure to produce an environmental impact assessment as part of their process of approving assistance for overseas projects, respondents tried to move the case to Washington, D.C., a less convenient location for petitioners, and to challenge standing.78

Because procedural issues are often outcome determinative—adjudicating bodies generally do not reach the merits if they find a procedural defect79 and the level of deference to lower courts is often definitive on appeal80—the procedural statutes and rules represent a powerful assertion of governmental authority. The entities creating the statutes and rules are providing the parameters within which externalities can be challenged, as well as the tools for doing so. A map of the procedural claims thus provides a window into the political and social context in which the struggle over externalities is occurring.

Together, these place-based relationships reveal the spatial matrix in which the actors and claims operate and the ways in which that structure shapes and constrains the role that such suits can play. These power dynamics that underlie the litigation provide insight into the possibilities for corporate responsibility in the energy sector.


77. For examples of offensive and defensive uses of collateral estoppel, see Brian Levine, Preclusion Confusion: A Call for Per Se Rules Preventing the Application of Collateral Estoppel to Findings Made in Nontraditional Litigation, 1999 ANN. SURV. AM. L. 435.


79. For example, if a court lacks subject matter jurisdiction, it will not reach the merits.

80. In the climate change litigation context, the D.C. Circuit recently failed to reach the merits on the EPA’s denial of a petition asking it to regulate carbon dioxide emissions by motor vehicles under the Clean Air Act. It held that the “EPA Administrator properly exercised his discretion under § 202(a)(1) in denying the petition for rulemaking.” Massachusetts v. EPA, 415 F.3d 50, 58 (D.C. Cir. 2005).
B. Spatial Implications

The diversity of actors and complex power relationships represented in climate change litigation are a far cry from the state of the treaties that constituted the Peace of Westphalia, which established the dominant power of the nation-state through an agreement between governmental representatives who had “implor’d the Divine Assistance.”81 These shifts occurring in multiple legal contexts have led some to trumpet the death of the Westphalian model, as part of the larger debate over the extent to which the nation-state still matters in our globalized world.82

Although factual disagreements certainly occur, scholarly views of the continued importance of nation-states often hinge on characterization of agreed-upon facts. Many entities other than nation-states matter in the modern global landscape, and non-state actors sometimes take on traditional governmental functions.83 This growing international civil society interacts in complex ways with the consent of sovereign states, which may or may not diminish their importance depending on one’s theoretical perspective.84

The geography of these cases exemplifies this complex landscape. A wide range of actors representing a diversity of places interact through the modality of a lawsuit. And yet governmental regulatory authority in multiple guises plays a role in every suit, beginning with the tribunals acting as adjudicators. Although national governmental entities—in their varying roles as proponents or opponents of stronger limitations on greenhouse gas emissions—do not act alone, efforts to control the


84. See supra note 82.
externalities of energy production through court action ultimately must rely upon their regulatory authority.

A map of the climate change litigation reveals three sets of relationships that the regulator must navigate in order to be effective. Each of these dynamics alone provides complex spatial questions. Together, they represent a three-dimensional, intertwined morass that serves as a formidable barrier to effective regulation of energy production’s externalities. Diagram 1 attempts to visually capture those relationships in a simplified, two-dimensional representation. Each element of the diagram, pictured as a simple oval, is actually made up of the overlapping entities portrayed in Diagrams 2, 3, and 4 respectively.85

Diagram 1 illustrates the intertwined axes that define the modified Westphalian terrain.

1. Multiscalar: Supranational, National, and Subnational

The nation-state is notably present in climate change litigation at every level of government. In subnational actions, many of the corporate and nongovernmental organization organizations are nationally based.86 The national level cases not only occur in federal tribunals, but also include

85. See infra Diagrams 2–4. The spatial model I derived from these cases has some similarities to the one presented by Anne-Marie Slaughter in A New World Order (2004). They both engage three-dimensional, overlapping spaces, and our first two axes are describing the parallel types of relationships; I use multiscalar where she uses vertical, and multibranch where she uses horizontal. My focus within those two axes, however, is somewhat broader, with a more substantial engagement of nongovernmental and subnational actors. Moreover, our third axes differ quite substantially, as she looks at disaggregated international organizations, and I look at governmental-nongovernmental dynamics. See id. at 18–23. An in-depth analysis of the relationship between transgovernmental network theory and this model is beyond the scope of this Article. I plan to explore this relationship in more depth, however, in the theoretical, normative companion piece to this Article.

86. See infra Part IV.
governmental and nongovernmental national-level actors and invoke federal statutory and constitutional law. The supranational petitions rely upon treaties to which national governments are parties—the most traditionally Westphalian nation-state role—and include those parties either directly as respondents or indirectly as part of the proposed solutions.

And yet these nation-state-based regulatory elements exist in interaction with other levels of government in every case. Because the phenomenon of climate change occurs within multiple regulatory domains, the tribunals themselves represent different types of governmental authority. Moreover, each case provides a unique microcosm of the subnational, national, and supranational dynamics represented in the simplified Diagram 2 below. In asserting sovereign control over energy production’s externalities, nation-states thus collaborate—and sometimes conflict—with regulatory efforts at other levels of government. Although this litigation potentially serves as a regulatory gap-filler to address jurisdictional mismatches, it also embodies those spatial conflicts among governmental levels.

Diagram 2

Diagram 2 illustrates the interrelated levels of governance at which the regulatory dynamics occur.

87. See infra Part V.
88. See infra Part VI.
89. William Buzbee extensively explored these mismatches in his article cited supra note 37.
2. Multibranch: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial

The traditional Westphalian model relies upon national executive authority, but modern nation-states with at least somewhat democratic governance structures generally also imbue legislative and judicial branches with regulatory authority relevant to transnational problems, such as energy production’s externalities. These cases are no exception. Each one involves the invocation of judicial power, whether to regulate corporate behavior directly or to force or prevent another government entity from engaging in such regulation. The more common formulation in the case studies is the latter one, with the result that many of these cases represent regulatory battles among governmental branches, sometimes at different levels of government.

These inter-branch dynamics, as illustrated by the simplified Diagram 3 below, provide a second axis along which regulatory conflicts and confluence emerge. Although the push and pull among branches sometimes occurs at purely the nation-state level, in which case it can be viewed as within the Westphalian actor, the cases often include inter-branch conflicts at multiple levels of government. These jurisdictional mismatches and resulting regulatory gaps become intertwined with dynamics among executives, legislators, and judges.

90. See Peace Treaty, supra note 81, art. CXIX.
91. For example, the U.S. Senate must ratify treaties, and the U.S. federal courts have interpreted the extent of the Executive’s foreign affairs powers. For an analysis of the relationship between international law and executive power, see Janet Koven Levit, International Law Happens (Whether the Executive Likes It or Not) (draft manuscript on file with author).
92. The national-level emissions case against U.S. power companies exemplifies this version, see infra notes 147–49 and accompanying text, as does in part the Nigerian case against oil companies, see infra notes 200–02 and accompanying text.
93. The other national-level emissions case, against the U.S. EPA, exemplifies this version. See infra notes 168–69 and accompanying text.
94. See infra Parts IV–VI.
95. The U.S. vehicle emissions case is the most dramatic example of intergovernmental conflicts. See infra Part V.B.1.
96. The vehicle emissions case most starkly exemplifies this phenomenon. For a mapping of its actors, see infra Part V.B.1.
97. See Buzbee, supra note 37, at 23–24 (exploring these mismatches in the context of environmental federalism).
Diagram 3 illustrates the relationships among governmental branches that shape the possibilities for regulation.

3. Multiactor: Governmental and Nongovernmental

As if the convoluted dynamics among the first two axes were not sufficient to create a regulatory morass, the cases also contain a complex geography of nongovernmental actors which both force and resist regulation. These relationships among governmental and nongovernmental entities form the third axis along which nation-states must navigate in asserting their sovereign authority, as represented in simplified form in Diagram 4 below. The national and subnational governments play a key role in governing these nongovernmental entities, as a survey of the geographic structures of the nongovernmental actors indicates. For example, the nongovernmental organizations and the corporation involved in the Hazelwood Mine and Power Station Case are regulated by national, regional, and local governmental authorities.98

Moreover, the actors themselves often overlap. The lines between corporations and nongovernmental organizations begin to blur as corporate greenhouse gas emitters form nongovernmental organizations to advocate on their behalf.99 As these different variations on nongovernmental, nonprofit organizations team with governmental entities on either or both sides of a lawsuit in which another governmental entity is adjudicating,100 the distinctions among those advocating, regulating, and

98. See infra notes 132–40 and accompanying text.
99. See infra notes 187–91 and accompanying text.
100. All of the case studies present some variation of this dynamic. See infra Parts IV–VI.
being regulated become less clear. And each of these entities relies upon individuals, who sometimes play a direct role in the lawsuit as well.\textsuperscript{101} Governmental efforts at corporate regulation must navigate this convoluted terrain in order to be effective.

\textit{Diagram 4}

Diagram 4 illustrates the interrelated types of actors who comprise the categories of petitioners, respondents, and adjudicators.

\section*{IV. Mapping Subnational Climate Change Litigation}

This Part and the two that follow map climate change litigation at subnational, national, and supranational levels. In dissecting this series of case studies, these Parts explore the implications of this adjudicative geography for broader issues of regulating energy production’s externalities.\textsuperscript{102} In so doing, these Parts do not aim to provide an exhaustive catalog of the ever-increasing list of cases engaging global climate change, but rather an exploration of representative cases that include a diversity of actors and legal claims.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{101} The Nigerian case and some of the World Heritage Committee petitions include individuals as petitioners. See \textit{infra} Parts V.C.1., VI.B.1.

\textsuperscript{102} The Article’s aim is not to create a comprehensive summary of climate change litigation, but rather to explore the implications of it. In selecting cases for my in-depth geographic analysis, I focused on those that represented the diversity of substantive claims and the spatial variations within categories of substantive claims.

\textsuperscript{103} For a detailing of the range of pending climate change litigation, see Climate Justice, \textit{supra} note 48.
The two subnational cases analyzed in this Part focus on whether it is appropriate for state or local administrative bodies to include greenhouse gas emissions in environmental assessments of corporations engaged in coal-based energy production. The first two sections explore ties to place in each case, and then the third section reflects on the geography of subnational climate change litigation.

A. Environmental Cost Valuation: Challenge to the Minnesota Scheme

At the direction of the state legislature, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission established interim environmental cost values for five air pollutants, one of which was carbon dioxide, which negatively impacts the environment primarily by contributing to global climate change. A trade association representing lignite coal producers, users, and suppliers challenged the inclusion of carbon dioxide, but the Minnesota Court of Appeals held in 1998 that the Commission’s order regarding carbon dioxide values was supported by substantial evidence. The decision thus provided judicial reinforcement of an administrative body’s implementation of legislative environmental regulation of corporations that produce electricity; this regulation remains in place today.

1. Actors

The relators listed in the Minnesota Court of Appeals decision for *In re the Quantification of Environmental Costs* included Western Fuels Association, Dairyland Power Cooperative, Minnesota Power and

105. Id.
107. 578 N.W.2d 974.
108. “Western Fuels Association, Inc. is a not-for-profit cooperative that supplies coal and transportation services to consumer-owned electric utilities throughout the Great Plains, Rocky Mountain and Southwest regions. Serving a wide variety of public power entities ranging from rural electric generation and transmission cooperatives to municipal utilities, WFA offers its Members diverse and extensive expertise in coal mining, coal procurement and transportation management.” *ANNUAL REPORT 2004: COAL IS WHERE YOUR POWER BEGINS, WESTERN FUELS ASSOCIATION* (2004), http://www.westernfuels.org/pdf/WFA2004AnnualReport.pdf. It has an office in Colorado and an operations office in Wyoming. Id. Its Class A members are Basin Electric Power Cooperative (North Dakota), Sunflower Electric Power Corporation (Kansas), and Tri-State Generation & Transmission Association, Inc. (Colorado). Id.
109.
Light,\textsuperscript{110} Center for Energy & Economic Development,\textsuperscript{111} Northern States Power Company,\textsuperscript{112} Otter Tail Power Company,\textsuperscript{113} and Lignite Energy Council.\textsuperscript{114} All of these entities produce power and/or represent companies that produce power in Minnesota and the surrounding states, and many of them have a national-scale operation.\textsuperscript{115} They have both localized and

With headquarters in La Crosse, Wis., Dairyland Power Cooperative is a generation and transmission cooperative (G&T) that provides the wholesale electrical requirements and other services for 25 electric distribution cooperatives and 20 municipal utilities in the Upper Midwest.

\ldots

Dairyland’s service area encompasses 62 counties in four states (Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa and Illinois).


\textsuperscript{110.}

Minnesota Power, a division of ALLETE, provides electricity in a 26,000-square-mile electric service territory located in northeastern Minnesota. Minnesota Power supplies retail electric service to 135,000 retail customers and wholesale electric service to 16 municipalities.

Superior Water, Light & Power (SWL&P) sells electricity and natural gas and provides water service in northwestern Wisconsin. SWL&P has 14,000 electric customers, 12,000 natural gas customers and 10,000 water customers.


\textsuperscript{111.}

The Center for Energy and Economic Development (CEED) is a non-profit group dedicated to protecting the viability of coal-based electricity. Working at the local, state, and regional levels, CEED communicates the truth about coal-conducting research, dispelling falsehoods, and educating the public and government officials about coal-based electricity’s importance to our way of life.


\textsuperscript{112.}


\textsuperscript{113.}


\textsuperscript{114.}

Although Lignite Energy Council is listed as a respondent at the beginning of the opinion, both its focus and the court’s reference to it later in the opinion as a relator suggest that the respondent designation was erroneous. \textit{See In re Quantification of Envtl. Costs}, 578 N.W.2d 794, 795–96, 799 (Minn. Ct. App. 1998). Lignite Energy Council, based in North Dakota, aims to “maintain a viable lignite coal industry and enhance development of the region's lignite coal resources for use in generating electricity, synthetic natural gas and valuable byproducts.” Lignite Energy Council, About Us, http://www.lignite-energy-council.org/about/index.htm (last visited Feb. 27, 2006).

\textsuperscript{115.} \textit{See supra} notes 108–13.
broader scale interests in minimizing the cost of power generation, and hence want to limit the substances included in environmental cost valuation.

The respondents listed in the Court of Appeals opinion included the Environmental Coalition, North Dakota, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, the Minnesota Attorney General, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and the Minnesota Department of Public Service. All of the respondents are either nonprofit organizations or governmental entities that have both localized and broader scale interests in limiting the environmental impact of power generation and tend to be supportive of including greenhouse gases within the list of substances. The


governmental entities are based in Minnesota and neighboring states. The non-profit Coalition members range from those that are Minnesota-based to those that are primarily nationally based.\textsuperscript{119} The adjudicator was Judge Randall of the Minnesota Court of Appeals.\textsuperscript{120} That court heard the appeal after relators petitioned for a writ of certiorari, following contested initial and reconsideration proceedings before the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission.\textsuperscript{121} The decision-makers thus reflect a much clearer tie to local geography than the parties do.

2. Claims

The facts of the environmental cost valuation case reflect a multiscalar geography. The dispute was over an environmental cost valuation system that applied within Minnesota and just outside its borders.\textsuperscript{122} This limited range of the system itself provides the case with a subnational geography. The reason that carbon dioxide was included in that system, however, was to address a supranational problem. The facts of the case thus cross-cut scale through a subnational environmental scheme including a supranational environmental problem.

The applicable law, however, is clearly subnational. Every statute and case relied upon by the court came from the Minnesota legislature and courts.\textsuperscript{123} For example, the judicial analysis of transnational data, such as the quality of the evidence in support of climate change, relied upon Minnesota’s judicial standards for the discretion of the Administrative Law Judge.\textsuperscript{124} The claims, as the state court system required, thus focused on where the judicial action was taking place rather than on the broader geography of the facts.

B. Environmental Review: Expansion of Coal-Based Energy in Victoria, Australia

In Australia, the Hazelwood Mine and Power Station, which contributes approximately twenty-two percent of Victoria’s base load

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{119} See supra note 116 and accompanying text.
\item \textsuperscript{120} In re Quantification of Envl. Costs, 578 N.W.2d 794, 794 (Minn. Ct. App. 1998).
\item \textsuperscript{121} Id. at 796–97.
\item \textsuperscript{122} One of the contested issues was whether carbon dioxide values should apply 200 miles beyond Minnesota state borders. Id. at 801–02.
\item \textsuperscript{123} See id.
\item \textsuperscript{124} Id. at 800–01.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
electricity, was running out of coal and wanted to add an additional coal
field, which would allow the power station to operate through 2031. The Minister for Planning approved a panel inquiry into the environmental
effects of the proposal, but provided terms of reference that excluded the
climate impacts from the use of coal to produce energy. Several
environmental groups challenged this exclusion, and in October 2004, the
Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, Administrative Division,
directed the panel to hear submissions under provisions of the Planning
and Environment Act on the greenhouse gas impact from the new coal
field. Although the expansion ultimately went forward, the ruling
resulted in the first Victorian greenhouse reduction deed, which
establishes emissions caps, provides for surrender of some of Hazelwood’s
coal, calls for set milestones and reporting requirements, and encourages
development of renewable energy projects. Environment Victoria, with
support from the Australian Conservation Foundation and Greenpeace,
criticized this agreement as “window dressing” on giving Hazelwood “the
goal of pump out vast amounts of additional greenhouse pollution.” The
decision thus provided judicial forcing of administrative regulatory
behavior with respect to the power station that provided the basis for
innovative and controversial policy-making.

1. Actors

The petitioners before the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal
in _Australian Conservation Foundation v. Latrobe City Council_ included the Australian Conservation Foundation, World Wildlife Fund (WWF)—
Australia, Environment Victoria, and Climate Action Network Australia (CANA). All four of them are Australian nonprofit environmental organizations. With the exception of Environment Victoria, the organizations have a primarily national or international geographic base; both WWF and CANA are national branches of international organizations, and Australia Conservation Foundation is a national-level organization. Although they all have a presence in Victoria and hence geographic ties to the subnational level, their agendas are mostly intertwined with broader national and international objectives.

The other parties in the case included the Latrobe City Council; the Minister for Planning; and International Power Hazelwood. Although the governmental entities are both tied to the local geography of the plant—it is located in the Latrobe Valley—International Power Hazelwood is owned by a multinational company headquartered in London. The office of its Australian subsidiary, Australian National
Power, is located in Melbourne, Victoria. Like the other governmental entities, the adjudicator—the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal—is also based at the state level.

2. Claims

The factual and legal claims in *Australian Conservation Foundation v. Latrobe City Council* reflect a similar dynamic. The facts revolve around the planning process for the development of a particular coal field located within the ambit of the City of Latrobe, which is within Victoria. The geography of the coal field and contested planning process is distinctly subnational. As in the environmental cost valuation case, however, the parties disputed whether the supranational environmental problem should be included in the subnational process.

The claims and opinion of the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal rely upon subnational and national law. The primary statute upon which the analysis focuses is Planning and Environment Act 1987, which was created by a subnational legislature. The case also references several other subnational statutes and one national statute. Although the ambit of applicable law is somewhat broader in this action—including the national—the case’s analysis, like the Minnesota one, has a different legal than factual geography. Subnational and national laws are applied not only to the subnational facts, but also to the supranational ones.

C. Geography of Subnational Cases

These cases’ geography reflects the fundamentally local and regional character of the legal structure in which they operate; the tribunals and governmental parties all have clear connections to the places in which the environmental assessments are occurring. The map of the non-state actors, however, indicates the broader implications of these cases and their interconnection with national and international power dynamics. In both cases, although most of the corporate and nongovernmental actors had

140. See *International Power*, supra note 139.
142. See supra note 127.
143. Id.
some connection to the locality in which the suit occurred, many of them were primarily nationally or internationally based.

The scalar differences between the non-state actors involved in the regulatory process and those entities actually regulating illuminates a core challenge for local efforts to regulate the externalities of energy production. The pollution-producing behavior occurs within the domain of a locality or region. The transnational and national character of the industry itself and of the nongovernmental organizations that concern themselves with it, however, does not fit neatly within a locally focused regulatory scheme.

The petitioners and respondents were aligned oppositely in the two cases, but the underlying geography of the actors in each case reflected the tension between the local character of the specific controversy and the transnational scope of climate change. The decision-makers and governmental parties all represented either the localities or states at the focus of the controversy, but the nongovernmental parties had a more complex geography. Although the corporations and nongovernmental organizations had significant ties to the subnational areas in which the disputes were taking place—and some were even locally or regionally-based—many of these non-state actors had broader national or international agendas. The spatial center of gravity of the parties and adjudicators was arguably subnational—Minnesota or Victoria—but both sets of actors clearly reflected national and international tensions over appropriate regulation of greenhouse gas emissions.

An analysis of the factual and legal claims in the two cases illuminates their geographic tensions even more starkly. In both cases, the facts have two distinct spatial elements: (1) the local environmental issue and (2) its interconnection with the supranational environmental issue. The applicable law, however, treats those facts through a primarily subnational lens. The focus of the legal analysis in each case was on the laws of Minnesota or Victoria, respectively.

In sum, not only do tribunals grapple with complex, transnational facts, but they also engage parties whose center of gravity often is not locally based. In order for subnational tribunals to engage these cases effectively, they must bridge disparate geographies. These dynamics raise questions

145. The relators in the environmental cost valuation case were challenging a legislative/administrative determination to treat carbon dioxide emissions as pollution, whereas the petitioners in the land use case were pushing for its inclusion in an environmental assessment. Compare In re Quantification of Envtl. Costs, 578 N.W.2d 794, 796–97 (Minn. Ct. App. 1998) with Australian Conservation Found., [2004] VCAT 2029.
about subnational tribunals as transnational judicial spaces and as actors in broader dialogue about climate change.  

V. MAPPING NATIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE LITIGATION

The national-level cases present an even more spatially complex terrain. Geographic diversity infuses these cases, which gain a national-level characterization primarily from the federal-level designation of the tribunal in which they are brought. Although the cases that follow often address interrelated substantive issues, each case involves a unique arrangement of place-based relationships.

This analysis engages the national-level climate change cases that focus substantively on emissions reduction and project financing. The cases include a mix of public and private actors as plaintiffs and defendants, and represent a form of governmental regulation of corporations. Within each of the major substantive categories, significantly different formulations of actors, facts, and legal claims emerge. Because these cases are all brought at the same level of government and engage interrelated facts, however, a comparative analysis of their geographies is particularly useful. Paralleling the subnational analysis, this Part explores the contours of each case and then provides an analysis of the geography of national-level climate change litigation.

A. Emissions Regulation: U.S. Power Companies

Eight states and New York City sued six major power companies that contribute “approximately one quarter of the U.S. electric power sector’s carbon dioxide emissions.” They claimed that these emissions’ contribution to global warming injure public health, coastal resources, water supplies, the Great Lakes, and economic interests, as well as increase the risk of wildfires and catastrophic climate change; as a result, these emissions constitute a public nuisance in violation of federal common law, or, in the alternative, state law. The case was dismissed in September 2005 by the Southern District of New York on the grounds that

146. I explore these issues in more depth in Hari M. Osofsky, Local Approaches to Transnational Corporate Responsibility: Mapping the Role of Subnational Climate Change Litigation, PAC. MCGEORGE GLOBAL BUS. & DEV. J. (forthcoming 2006).
148. Id. at 30–41.
149. Id. at 1–2.
it raised nonjusticiable political questions, due to the “identification and balancing of economic, environmental, foreign policy, and national security interests” requiring a policy determination by the political branches.150 This case thus represents an effort to use the judiciary to regulate the behavior of corporations through federal common law and state-level law, an effort that this federal judicial actor objected to on the grounds that such regulation was in the political branches’ purview.

1. Actors

The public nuisance case against the power companies presents the simplest geography of actors of the three emissions regulation cases. The petitioners include the states of California, Connecticut, Iowa, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin, as well as the City of New York.151 They are all subnational governmental entities that claim to be bringing the action in order to protect their property and their citizens’ health, well-being, and natural resources.152

The defendants include American Electric Power Company, Inc.,153 American Electric Power Service Corporation,154 The Southern Company,155 Tennessee Valley Authority,156 Xcel Energy Inc.,157 and Cinergy Corporation.158 They are corporations involved in electricity generation processes that rely on fossil fuels. Their operations span several states within the United States,159 and they have an interest in minimizing

151. *Complaint*, *supra* note 147, at 1.
152. *Id* at 3–5.
153. American Electric Power Company, Inc. (AEP) is a corporation with New York citizenship and its principal place of business in Ohio. It generates electricity in Arkansas, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. *Id* at 5.
154. American Electric Power Service Corporation is a wholly-owned subsidiary of AEP and has the same citizenship and principal place of business. Its functions include providing management and professional services to AEP’s electric utility subsidiaries. *Id*.
155. The Southern Company has Delaware citizenship, with its principal place of business in Georgia. It is a registered public utility holding company with several domestic subsidiaries that generate electricity in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Mississippi. *Id* at 6.
156. Tennessee Valley Authority is a federal corporation, with its principal place of business in Tennessee. It directly owns and operates facilities that generate electricity in Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee. *Id* at 4.
157. Xcel Energy Inc. has both citizenship and its principal place of business in Minnesota. It is a registered public utility holding company with four domestic subsidiaries that generate electricity in Colorado, Minnesota, New Mexico, South Dakota, Texas, and Wisconsin. *Id* at 8.
158. Cinergy Corporation has Delaware citizenship, with its principal place of business in Ohio. It is a registered public utility holding company with two subsidiaries that generate electricity in Indiana, Kentucky, and Ohio. *Id* at 9.
159. *Id* at 5–10.
regulation of greenhouse gas emissions. The adjudicator is the Southern District of New York, a federal judicial entity that covers several counties—Bronx, Dutchess, New York, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, and Westchester—within New York State.  

2. Claims

The facts of this case present a multilevel geography. On the one hand, the emissions by the defendant corporations and their sub-entities are occurring in specific localities in Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Moreover, each of the defendants has citizenship in a particular state. On the other hand, the suit focuses on the emissions as a substantial portion of overall national U.S. emissions and on their contribution to the supranational problem of climate change.

The claims for relief are simultaneously national and subnational. Substantively, plaintiffs allege violations of the federal common law of public nuisance, and in the alternative, state law public nuisance. Procedurally, they make federal law claims for subject matter and personal jurisdiction and for venue, some of which rely upon connections to a particular subnational area.

B. Emissions Regulation: U.S. Vehicles

Twelve states, three cities, a U.S. territory, and thirteen nongovernmental organizations are petitioners in a lawsuit under the Administrative Procedure Act and Clean Air Act against the EPA, ten other states, and nineteen industry and utility groups. The plaintiffs

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161. See supra notes 153–58 and accompanying text.
162. Id.
163. See Complaint, supra note 147, at 1.
164. Id. at 43–49.
165. Id. at 10–21.
166. For example, the venue and personal jurisdiction claims rely on the defendants’ connections to and activities in the Southern District of New York. Id.
challenged the EPA’s denial of a petition requesting that it regulate greenhouse gas emissions from motor vehicles under section 202(a)(1) of the Clean Air Act.\footnote{168} Without reaching the merits, the Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit ruled in July 2005 that the EPA acted within its discretion in deciding not to regulate the emissions,\footnote{169} and the Circuit denied rehearing en banc in December 2005.\footnote{170} Petitioners filed a Petition for Writ of Certiorari with the U.S. Supreme Court on March 2, 2006, which was granted on June 26, 2006.\footnote{171} This case thus represents an effort by local and state executive branches and nongovernmental entities to use judicial authority to force regulation by a federal executive branch agency, an effort opposed by other state-level executive branch and corporate representatives; a federal appeals court denied the case out of deference to the discretion of that federal executive branch agency, a denial which is now under review by the Supreme Court.

1. Actors

A geographic analysis of parties in the consolidated suit against the EPA over its refusal to regulate greenhouse gas emissions under section 202(a)(1) of the Clean Air Act is far more convoluted, but reveals the scope and complexity of the power dynamics involved. The governmental petitioners include twelve U.S. states: California, Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington; the U.S. territory of American Samoa; and three cities: Baltimore, New York, and Washington, D.C.\footnote{172}

\footnote{169} See supra note 80 and accompanying text.
\footnote{170} Massachusetts v. EPA, 433 F.3d 66 (D.C. Cir. 2005).

\footnote{172} ICTA Parties Listing, supra note 168; see also Final Brief for the Petitioners in Consolidated Cases, Massachusetts v. EPA, 415 F.3d 50 (No. 03-1361) (D.C. Cir. 2005), available at http://www.icta.org/doc/Petitioners%20Final%20Brief%201.25.05.pdf.
The thirteen nongovernmental organizations that are also petitioners include Bluewater Network, Center for Biological Diversity, Center for Food Safety, Conservation Law Foundation, Earthjustice, Environmental Advocates of New York, Greenpeace, International Center for Technology Assessment, National Environmental Trust, Natural Resources Defense Council, Public Interest Research Group, and others.


174. Center for Biological Diversity is a nonprofit organization based in Arizona, with other offices in New Mexico, California, Oregon, and Washington, D.C. It has 13,000 members nationwide, and it works to protect endangered species. Center for Biological Diversity, Fact Sheet, http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/swcbd/aboutus/factsheet.pdf (last visited Feb. 27, 2006).

175. Center for Food Safety is a nonprofit organization with a national office in Washington, D.C., and a West Coast office in San Francisco. It was “established in 1997 by its sister organization, International Center for Technology Assessment, for the purpose of challenging harmful food production technologies and promoting sustainable alternatives.” The Center for Food Safety, About Us, http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/about_us.cfm (last visited Feb. 27, 2006).


177. Earthjustice is a nonprofit law firm that works to protect the environment. Its national headquarters are in California, and it also has offices in Alaska, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Montana, Washington, and Washington, D.C. See Earthjustice, About Us, http://www.earthjustice.org/about/ (last visited Feb. 27, 2006).


180. International Center for Technology Assessment is a tax-exempt, nonprofit organization that is incorporated in Washington, D.C., and engages in advocacy at a local, state, and federal level throughout the United States. Id. at 2–5.


183. The U.S. Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) is a nonprofit based in Washington, D.C., with regional field offices in Massachusetts, Georgia, Louisiana, Arizona, and Hawaii. U.S. PIRG,
Sierra Club, and Union of Concerned Scientists. They are subnationally based, nationally based, and internationally based organizations engaged in environmental advocacy. Three additional nonprofit organizations filed amici briefs in support of the petitioners.

The parties aligned with the respondent are similarly diverse. In addition to the initial respondent, the EPA, ten states and three entities representing industry and utility companies intervened in the lawsuit in support of the respondent. The ten states were Alaska, Idaho, Kansas, Michigan, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Utah, and Texas. The industry intervenor-respondents were grouped into three coalitions: the Vehicle Intervenor Coalition, the CO2 Litigation Group, and the


184. The Sierra Club is a nonprofit organization incorporated under California law that engages in advocacy throughout the United States and internationally. See First Amended Compliant for Declaratory Relief and Writ of Mandamus or Other Order, supra note 179, at 5–7.

185. Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) is a nonprofit organization with a national office in Cambridge, Massachusetts, as well as offices in Washington, D.C., and Berkeley, California. “UCS is an independent nonprofit alliance of more than 100,000 concerned citizens and scientists. [It] augment[s] rigorous scientific analysis with innovative thinking and committed citizen advocacy to build a cleaner, healthier environment and a safer world.” Union of Concerned Scientists, About UCS, http://www.ucsusa.org/ucs/about/index.cfm (last visited Mar. 1, 2006).


188. For a detailed description of those three entities, see infra notes 189–91 and accompanying text.


http://openscholarship.wustl.edu/law_lawreview/vol83/iss6/3

Utility Air Regulatory Group. These coalitions represent a wide range of local, national, and transnational entities involved in business generally and in the processes that lead to the release of greenhouse gases in particular. Congressman John Dingell of Michigan, the Washington Legal Foundation, and the State of Indiana also filed amici briefs on behalf of the respondents. The petitioners and respondents thus include both governmental and nongovernmental entities that span numerous geographies at multiple levels.

The judicial actor in this case is a national-level court with a geographic tie to Washington, D.C. The adjudicator in the latest opinion in the case was the Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. The adjudicator currently is the U.S. Supreme Court, also based in Washington, D.C., but serving as the highest court of the nation-state.

2. Claims

Although they engage multiple spaces, the claims in the motor vehicle emissions case have a far more straightforward geography than the actors do. The facts involve the U.S. EPA’s denial of a national-level rulemaking petition under a national-level law, the Clean Air Act, to address emissions that contribute to the supranational phenomenon of climate change, which
has localized effects at a subnational level. The substantive and procedural claims made by the petitioners rely upon national-level statutes to address these facts that range in scale. They argue that section 202(a)(1) of the Clean Air Act authorizes the EPA to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from motor vehicles, and that the Energy Policy and Conservation Act does not preclude such regulation. They appeal based on the Administrative Procedure Act, and argue that the EPA acted arbitrarily in denying the petition. They claim that the court has jurisdiction based on specific provisions of federal statutes.

C. Emissions Regulation: Nigerian Oil Companies’ Gas Flaring

Eight individuals, each of whom lives in a different community impacted by gas flaring, sued six oil companies and the attorney general of Nigeria for violations of sections 33(1) and 33(4) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria—as reinforced by Articles 4, 16, and 24 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights—and of the Environmental Impact Assessment Act. They claimed that the gas flaring violates “their fundamental rights to life and dignity of human person,” and they requested both declaratory and injunctive relief. After the filing of this suit, the Executive Director of Environmental Rights Action/Friends of Earth Nigeria (ERA) was detained for two hours for questioning that included discussion of the lawsuit. In November 2005, however, the Federal High Court of Nigeria in the Benin Judicial Division granted declaratory relief, enjoined the gas flaring by Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited (Shell Nigeria) and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), and ordered legislative processes to begin amending a problematic statute. After the gas flaring continued, petitioners filed contempt of court proceedings against Shell Nigeria and NNPC. On April 11, 2006, the Federal High Court of

196. See Massachusetts, 415 F.3d 50.
197. Final Brief for the Petitioners in Consolidated Cases, supra note 172.
198. Id.
199. Id.
200. Motion Exparte, supra note 65, Statement at 1–2.
201. Id.
202. Climate Justice, Executive Director of Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria (ERA), Detained for Two Hours at Lagos Airport (July 8, 2005), http://www.climatelaw.org/media/bassey.detained.
Nigeria ordered Shell Nigeria and NNPC to end the flaring by April 2007 and to appear before the court on May 31, 2006 with a detailed plan for doing so.205 This action thus is an effort by individuals, with the support of nongovernmental organizations, to use the federal judiciary to regulate corporations directly and to force regulatory behavior by the federal executive branch, a role that the judiciary decided to play in its November 2005 and April 2006 orders.

1. Actors

The Nigerian gas flaring case represents yet another geographic variation. The plaintiffs are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and also members of eight communities within the Niger Delta State.206 As such, they connect to place at a national level through their citizenship and at a state and local level through their residence and longstanding community ties. In filing this suit, these individuals were supported by ERA, a Nigerian nongovernmental organization that is a chapter of Friends of the Earth International, an international nongovernmental organization.207

The defendants include one national-level governmental actor, the Attorney General of the Federation, and six corporations: Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited,208 Total/Fina/Elf Limited,209

209. SPDC is the pioneer and leader of the petroleum industry in Nigeria. It has the largest acreage in the country from which it produces some 43 per cent of the nation's oil. The company's operations are concentrated in the Niger Delta and adjoining shallow offshore areas where it operates in an oil mining lease area of around 31,000 square kilometres. SPDC has more than 6,000 kilometres of pipelines and flowlines, 87 flowstations, 8 gas plants and more than 1,000 producing wells.
Shell Nigeria, The Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC), http://www.shell.com/home/Framework?siteId=nigeria (follow “About Shell Nigeria” hyperlink; then follow “What We Do” hyperlink; then follow “Exploration and Production” hyperlink; then follow “Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC)” hyperlink (last visited Mar. 1, 2006). "Shell Companies in Nigeria are part of the Shell Group whose diverse activities contribute to the economies of over 135 countries.” Shell Nigeria, Structure, http://www.shell.com/home/Framework?siteId=nigeria (follow “About Shell Nigeria” hyperlink; then follow “Who We Are” hyperlink; then follow

http://openscholarship.wustl.edu/law_lawreview/vol83/iss6/3
Nigerian Agip Oil Company Limited,\textsuperscript{210} Chevron/Texaco Nigeria Limited,\textsuperscript{211} Mobil Producing Nigeria Limited,\textsuperscript{212} and Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation.\textsuperscript{213} The first five corporate defendants are all joint ventures between major multinational oil corporations and the sixth defendant, Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, that engage in oil-related activities in the plaintiff’s communities.\textsuperscript{214} As a result, these

\textsuperscript{210} Total Fina Elf is one of the first world’s largest international oil companies. With operations in over 100 countries, Total Fina Elf’s activities cover the entire oil chain, from the upstream (exploration, development and oil and gas production) through to downstream (refining and distribution of oil products and international trading of crude oil and products).

\textsuperscript{211} The Nigerian Agip Oil Company, “[t]he fourth largest oil producer in Nigeria[,] is owned by [Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation] (60%), Agip Oil (20%), and Phillips Petroleum (20%). Current production is about 145,000 [barrels per day], from 146 producing wells. The company operates an export terminal at Brass, and has its operational base in Port Harcourt.”

\textsuperscript{212} This is a joint venture [(JV)] that is now the second largest operation in the country. The JV also has the only condensate operation in Nigeria, and is owned by [Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation] (60%), and Mobil Oil (40%).

\textsuperscript{213} Most of Mobil’s production is from shallow water offshore fields, with its operating unit based in the southeast location of Eket.

\textsuperscript{214} The industry is dominated by six major joint venture operations managed by a number of well known multinationals, Shell, Mobil, Chevron, Agip, Elf, and Texaco. The production concessions are managed through joint venture companies, in which the Nigerian Government, through the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC), holds about 60% shareholding. The foreign joint venture partners manage the operations, under a joint equity financing structure regulated by a Joint
corporate entities have local, national, and international connections to place.

The Motion Exparte and the contempt of court proceedings were brought in the Federal High Court of Nigeria in the Benin Judicial Division,\(^{215}\) and that court responded to them.\(^{216}\) The decision-makers are part of the national government, but are based in the particular locality of Benin City.

2. Claims

Like the other two emissions cases, the Nigerian oil-company gas flaring case contained claims that connect to multiple regulatory levels. The facts focused on the local impacts of subnational gas flaring in particular communities. These impacts were framed, however, both in terms of localized pollution and in terms of the effect on these communities from the flaring’s contribution to the supranational problem of climate change.\(^{217}\) The legal claims relied upon both national and supranational law. Petitioners claimed a violation of Nigeria’s Constitution, as reinforced by articles of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, as well as of the Environmental Impact Assessment Act. They further argued that the federal statute authorizing the flaring, the Associated Gas Re-Injection Act, is unconstitutional.\(^{218}\)

D. Project Finance: U.S. Agency Assistance for Overseas Projects

Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, and four U.S. cities brought a lawsuit under the National Environmental Policy Act and Administrative Procedure Act challenging the failure of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation and the Export-Import Bank of the United States to produce an environmental impact assessment as part of the process of approving loans, insurance, and other assistance for overseas projects.\(^{219}\) Plaintiffs claimed, in particular, that these projects produce annual greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to almost two-thirds of U.S. annual carbon dioxide emissions.
emissions, and thus provide a substantial contribution to global warming. In August 2005, the Northern District of California denied the defendants’ summary judgment motion. This case thus represents an ongoing effort to use the judiciary to force administrative compliance with federal-level legislatively created law with respect to funding corporate projects.

1. Actors

The petitioners in the U.S. project finance case include four local governmental entities—the cities of Boulder, Colorado; Arcata, California; Oakland, California; and Santa Monica, California—and two nongovernmental organizations, Friends of the Earth, Inc., and Greenpeace, Inc. Both of the nongovernmental organizations operate at a local, national, and international level, and are involved with other climate change litigation. The defendants are two individuals being sued in their official capacity as officers of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) and the Export-Import Bank of the United States (ExIm). OPIC and ExIm are both nationally based governmental entities engaged in transnational financial operations. The lawsuit is before the San Francisco Division of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California. The judge is thus an individual who functions as part of the national government, but has subnational ties to place.

2. Claims

The facts in the case against OPIC and ExIm also occur at multiple levels. OPIC and ExIm are engaging in national level assistance for...
projects occurring in localities in other nations. Both cities and specific individuals who are based in particular substate localities and are members of the nongovernmental organizations have claimed to be affected by the contributions of these projects to global climate change.\textsuperscript{226} The substantive and procedural legal claims rely on national level laws, but have subnational and supranational components due to the nature of the facts. Substantively, petitioners argued that OPIC and ExIm violated the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) by failing to conduct environmental review of the overseas projects.\textsuperscript{227} Procedurally, they claimed the court has jurisdiction and venue based on Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, but their venue analysis had subnational dimensions, such as the fact that at least one plaintiff resides in the court’s district.\textsuperscript{228}

\textbf{E. Project Finance: German Agency Assistance for Overseas Projects}

In 2003, Germanwatch and Friends of the Earth Germany (BUND) submitted a request for information under the Environmental Information Act regarding the support of energy production projects by export credit agency Euler Hermes AG, which provides economic and political risk insurance for exports to developing and transitional countries.\textsuperscript{229} The Ministry of Economics and Labour refused their request, and in June 2004, Germanwatch and BUND brought an action against the Ministry in the Administrative Court in Berlin.\textsuperscript{230} They claimed Hermes provides significant support for projects that produce substantial greenhouse gas contributions, and that the Act provides them with the right to this information so that they can insure it is taken into account in the decision-making process.\textsuperscript{231} A first hearing took place in July 2005, and the court issued an order that constituted part of a settlement in January 2006; the order required the defendant to provide detailed information on the greenhouse gas implications of projects in the field of energy production.\textsuperscript{232} This case thus represents a successful effort to use the judiciary to force an administrative ministry to comply with a federal-level

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{226} Complaint for Declaratory and Injunctive Relief (Second Amended), supra note 219.  \\
\textsuperscript{227} Id. at 3.  \\
\textsuperscript{228} Id. at 3–4.  \\
\textsuperscript{229} Germanwatch & BUND, supra note 75.  \\
\textsuperscript{230} Id.  \\
\textsuperscript{231} Id.  \\
\textsuperscript{232} For relevant documents, see Climate Justice, Climate Impacts of German Export Credits to Be Disclosed, http://www.climatelaw.org/media/Germany (last visited Mar. 1, 2006).
\end{flushleft}
legislatively created law in an effort to influence funding of corporate projects.

1. Actors

The petitioners in the German case, Germanwatch and BUND, are German nongovernmental organizations. They each have a subnational presence and ties to nongovernmental organizations operating in other countries and internationally. The respondent is the German Ministry of Economics and Labour (BMWA), a national-level government entity that is the lead supervisor of the activities of German export credit agencies. The petitioners focused on this respondent because they sought information from one of the export credit agencies regulated by the BMWA, Euler Hermes AG (Hermes), which is a corporate entity active at both national and supranational levels. Petitioners brought the action in the Administrative Court in Berlin, and the judge is thus a representative of the federal government based in a particular subnational geographic location.

2. Claims

The action against Hermes also reflects its national-level setting while incorporating subnational and supranational elements. The action focused on Hermes’ provision of export guarantees for German companies’
exports to developing and economically transitional countries, a transnational process. The nongovernmental organizations requested information regarding the insured projects’ production of greenhouse gas emissions—which contribute to supranational global climate change but occur in particular localities—from national ministries that supervise the activities of Hermes in Germany. The lawsuit resulted from those ministries’ denial of the request.238

The legal claims have both national and supranational dimensions. The action asked the court to force the federal government to give the requested information, based on the Environmental Information Act of the Federal Republic of Germany. The petitioners further relied upon the European Court of Justice’s interpretation of EU Directive 90/313, which has been transposed into German law by the Environmental Information Act.239 The Berlin Administrative Court’s January 2006 order engaged both federal and EU law, and also referenced guidelines developed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.240

F. Geography of National Cases

As in the subnational context, the map of the national cases uncovers complex relationships among place and space. Each of the five national-level cases considered here presents a quite different formulation of parties, but they all have a scalar diversity among their actors that raises regulatory concerns. Petitioners range from state and city governments to nongovernmental organizations to individuals. Respondents include state and national governmental entities, as well as corporations and the organizations that represent them. These national level fora, with ties to particular subnational localities, are thus being asked to engage actors whose geography does not match their own.

All of the national-level cases studied, regardless of subject matter, follow a similar spatial pattern with respect to their claims. Their facts contain subnational, national, and supranational dimensions. The resulting legal claims rely heavily on national-level statutes and cases, and outside of the U.S. context, on applicable supranational regional law.

The national tribunals, like the subnational courts analyzed in the preceding part, are thus asked to play a bridging role in these cases. The

238. Id. at 1–2.
239. See id. at 2.
240. For links to the official opinion in German and the unofficial English translation, see Climate Justice, supra note 232.
courts face petitioners and respondents connected to subnational and supranational interests in addition to national ones; these parties notably include conflicting governmental entities. The facts range across geographies, and often subnational or supranational law becomes relevant to the legal analysis before these national-level courts.

VI. MAPPING SUPRANATIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE LITIGATION

The pending supranational petitions involving the externality of climate change and its impacts currently focus on international human rights and protection of world heritage. These petitions are being brought by nongovernmental organizations and individuals with a state as the respondent, to the extent that there are respondents, but they also involve underlying corporate behavior. This Part maps the pending petitions and then analyzes the geography of the supranational actions.

A. International Human Rights: Inuit Petition to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

The Inuit petition described in the Introduction was brought against the United States in the Inter-American Commission, which only accepts petitions against nation-state parties. Because energy production and use provide such a significant portion of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, the petition’s claims about the inadequacy of U.S. policy necessarily include its approach to regulating energy. The petition can thus be seen as an effort to force national policy, at both an executive and legislative level, with respect to climate change generally and to greenhouse gas emissions from the energy industry in particular.

241. Future actions to address climate change may also include claims regarding marine pollution in the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and claims regarding illegal subsidies in the World Trade Organization. See ASIL 2006 Annual Meeting Proposal, Climate Justice: Unpacking Transnational and International Litigation (on file with author).

242. See supra notes 1–5 and accompanying text.

243. The phenomenon represented in the Inuit case of using human rights actions against state parties to induce governmental regulation of corporate actors is not confined to the climate change context. My interest in the state-corporate regulatory dynamic arose due to a prior project I completed on environmental rights. In the thirteen environmental rights actions in international and regional tribunals I considered in that study, which also analyzed cases in U.S. courts under the Alien Tort Claims Act, all of the cases were brought against governments, as “claims were not allowed against private parties. In ten of the thirteen cases studied, however, a private entity regulated by the government was the direct cause of the harm, and in another two of those cases [as in the Inuit case discussed in this Article], corporations appeared to play some role.” Osofsky, supra note 8, at 121–22.

244. See infra notes 250–51 and accompanying text.
1. Actors

The international human rights action by the Inuit involves multiple geographies: The chair of a supranational nongovernmental organization that represents individuals in subnational localities petitioned a supranational organization against a nation-state. In particular, the petitioner is Sheila Watt-Cloutier with the support of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, a nongovernmental organization representing the approximately 150,000 Inuit of Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Russia. It was brought “on behalf of all Inuit of the Arctic regions of the United States and Canada,” who are peoples that have multiscalar ties at the levels of their local communities, states, nations, the Arctic region, and international organizations. The Inuit Circumpolar Conference’s Office of the Chair is located in Iqaluit, Canada, and it also has offices in each of the four countries in which the Inuit live. The respondent is the United States, which acknowledges that almost twenty percent of the world’s human-made greenhouse gases originate from within its borders and projects that its emissions will continue to rise. The petition is before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, a regional human rights body that is an organ of the Organization of American States (OAS). The Commission members are elected by the OAS General Assembly and do not represent a particular country.

2. Claims

The claims in the petition involve facts that cross-cut geographies. The Inuit present evidence of harm occurring in specific subnational regions of


246. See Inuit Petition, supra note 1, at cover page.


248. Inuit Circumpolar Conference, supra note 245.

249. See supra notes 1–2 and accompanying text.


253. See id.
four nation-states and argue that this harm results from supranational climate change, to which the United States is a substantial contributor through its failure to regulate adequately. The petition claims that these harms violate rights articulated in the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man. The Commission interprets the rights in the Inter-American human rights documents, however, based on broader international law and developments. The Commission thus will apply regional supranational human rights law, relying in part on other supranational law, to address facts that have subnational, national, and supranational elements.

B. World Heritage Preservation: Danger List Petitions to the World Heritage Committee

In November 2004, nongovernmental organizations and individuals filed petitions with the World Heritage Committee requesting that Belize’s Barrier Reef (Belize Petition), Peru’s Huascán National Park (Peru Petition), and Nepal’s Sagarmatha (Everest) National Park (Nepal Petition) be placed on the List of World Heritage in Danger, due to the impacts of climate change. They also filed a September 2005 report

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254. Inuit Petition, supra note 1.
        According to the jurisprudence of the inter-American human rights system, the provisions of its governing instruments, including the American Declaration, should be interpreted and applied in context of developments in the field of international human rights law since those instruments were first composed and with due regard to other relevant rules of international law applicable to member states against which complaints of human rights violations are properly lodged.
with the World Heritage Committee on climate change’s impact on the 
Great Barrier Reef in Australia (Australia Report) that details Australia’s 
obligations under the World Heritage Convention.\textsuperscript{258}

At its twenty-ninth session, in July 2005, the World Heritage 
Committee responded to these petitions and the report by acknowledging 
that “the impacts of climate change are affecting many and are likely to 
affect many more World Heritage properties, both natural and cultural in 
the years to come,” encouraging “all States Parties to seriously consider 
the potential impacts of climate change within their management 
planning,” and requesting that the World Heritage Centre organize 
collaboratively “a broad working group of experts” to prepare a report on 
these issues for the thirtieth session.\textsuperscript{259} In February 2006, organizations 
and individuals filed a similar petition regarding Waterton-Glacier 
International Peace Park, which is located in both the United States and 
Canada.\textsuperscript{260}

If the World Heritage Committee agrees to add sites threatened by 
climate change to the Danger List, the sites will be able to access financial 
assistance from the World Heritage Fund as well as help with conservation 
planning.\textsuperscript{261} If intended to address the problems fully, however, such 
planning would not be able to follow the typical model because the States 
Parties concerned include many countries beyond the host country of the 
site;\textsuperscript{262} the nation-state in which the harm is occurring often is not a 
substantial contributor to global climate change and thus has little ability

\textsuperscript{258} DONALD R. ROTHWELL, SYDNEY CTR. FOR INT’L AND GLOBAL LAW, GLOBAL CLIMATE
CHANGE AND THE GREAT BARRIER REEF: AUSTRALIA’S OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE WORLD HERITAGE
09_04.pdf; see E-mail from Peter Roderick, Co-Director, Climate Justice Programme, to author (Aug.
5, 2005) (on file with author).

\textsuperscript{259} Decision 29 COM 7B.a, supra note 257.

\textsuperscript{260} Petition to the World Heritage Committee Requesting Inclusion of Waterton-Glacier
International Peace Park on the List of World Heritage in Danger as a Result of Climate Change and
for Protective Measures and Actions (Feb. 16, 2006), available at http://law.lclark.edu/org/ielp/
objects/Waterton-GlacierPetition2.15.06.pdf.

\textsuperscript{261} See World Heritage Centre, supra note 70.

\textsuperscript{262} Id.
to address the situation beyond implementing localized mitigating measures.

Like the planned legal action by the Inuit, the petitions to the World Heritage Committee are not aimed at the regulation of specific corporate actors. These petitions, by their nature, are not structured to include a respondent, though they generally specify who should be involved in addressing the danger. For example, the petition on the Belize Barrier Reef includes a request that the Committee assist “the Government of Belize and Non-Governmental Organizations in developing a program of immediate corrective measures for the Site.”263 These cases can be viewed, however, as an effort to put pressure on State Parties to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, which States likely would achieve in part through the process of regulating emissions from the production and use of energy.

1. Actors

The actors in the petitions and report filed in 2004 with the World Heritage Commission have parallel geographies, each of which represents a slightly different variation of relevant actors.264 The Belize Petition was submitted by the Belize Institute of Environmental Law and Policy (BELPO), a nongovernmental organization incorporated in Belize, based on an idea presented at the Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide (E-Law) 2002 annual meeting. The University of Florida/University of Costa Rica Joint Program in Environmental Law and its Conservation Clinic assisted in the construction of the petition, which also was aided by foundation support to the Joint Program and to E-Law.265 E-Law and the Climate Justice Programme, based in the United States and United Kingdom, respectively, advocated in support of the petition.266

The Peru Petition was submitted by two Peruvian nongovernmental organizations and individuals affiliated with them. Foro Ecología del Peru is a national network of nongovernmental organizations and citizens promoting sustainable development, and Carlos Antonio Martin Soria

263. Belize Petition, supra note 257.
264. The 2006 Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park petition also demonstrates a multiscalar geography, but is not reviewed in depth here.
265. Belize Petition, supra note 257.
Dall’Orso is a Peruvian environmental lawyer who serves at its legal advisor.267 Foro Ciudades Para La Vida is a national network of nongovernmental organizations aiming to implement the principles and objectives of Habitat II and the Rio Conference, and Architect Liliana Miranda serves as its executive secretary.268 E-Law and the Climate Justice Programme also advocated for action on this petition.269

The Nepal Petition was submitted by an even larger group of nongovernmental organizations and individuals: The Forum for Protection of Public Interest (Pro Public), a Nepalese nonprofit affiliated with Friends of the Earth, as well as the Forum’s executive director; two Nepalese citizens who are accomplished mountaineers; International Public Interest Defenders, a nongovernmental organization based in Geneva; and a range of U.S. and European individuals served as the petitioners.270 As with the other two petitions discussed, E-Law and the Climate Justice Programme were both involved as proponents.271 The three petitions thus all resulted from the work of nationally based nongovernmental organizations, with the assistance of individuals, organizations, universities, and foundations based in the host countries and in the United States and Europe.

The Australia Report was prepared by the Sydney Centre for International and Global Law, which is part of the Faculty of Law at the University of Sydney. The report had been requested by the Environmental Defender’s Office New South Wales (Ltd),272 CANA,273 and Greenpeace Australia Pacific.274 It thus represents an initiative by

267. Peru Petition, supra note 257.
268. Id.
269. See sources cited supra note 266.
270. See Nepal Petition, supra note 257.
271. See sources cited supra note 266.
273. For a description of CANA, see supra note 135.
274. Greenpeace International began in Canada in 1971 and today has a presence in more than 40 countries across Europe, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific.

Greenpeace Australia was founded in 1977 and joined forces with Greenpeace Pacific in 1998. Together we have more than 113,000 supporters who are the backbone of Greenpeace Australia Pacific.

nongovernmental organizations operating at a subnational, national, and supranational level, assisted by a subunit of a subnationally based university that focuses on supranational issues.

Because of the structure of the petition process, there are no official respondents in any of the cases. Each petition, however, asks the Committee to involve the host country of the site, as well as to assist with both localized and international efforts to address climate change and its impacts.275 Similarly, although the Australia Report includes a disclaimer that “[i]t does not purport to provide any advice of a legal character concerning questions of Australian law” and “should not be relied upon for the purpose of any legal process or proceedings,”276 it analyzes steps that the Australian government needs to take with respect to climate change to comply with its obligations under the World Heritage Convention.277 The petitions and report are thus requesting action with respect to entities at subnational, national, and supranational levels.

The Committee is an intergovernmental body created by the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention).278 The Convention dictates that States Parties, with an equitable representation of regions and cultures, serve as the members of the Committee.279 The Committee has requested the establishment of a working group of experts—created collaboratively by the World Heritage Center, Advisory Bodies, interested States Parties, and petitioners—to address the risks posed by global climate change to World Heritage sites and to propose a management strategy.280 The decision-makers are thus nation-states acting within a supranational structure and being advised by expert individuals from around the world.


275. Belize Petition, supra note 257; Nepal Petition, supra note 257; Peru Petition, supra note 257.
277. Id. at 14–38.
279. Id. art. 8.
280. Decision 29 COM 7B.a, supra note 257.
2. Claims

The factual and legal claims in the petitions and report to the World Heritage Committee are geographically similar both to one another and to the ones in the Inuit case. The facts in each submission detail harm to a subnational resource, regulated by a State Party, which has been designated by a supranational body as belonging “to all the peoples of the world, irrespective of the territory on which they are located.” Each petition claims that supranational climate change is endangering the sites sufficiently to include them on a supranational danger list and to require steps to address the problem. The applicable law is the supranational World Heritage Convention. The claims thus involve the application of an international regulatory regime to multilevel facts.

C. Geography of Supranational Cases

Although the map of supranational cases reflects a similar spatial diversity to the subnational and national ones, the specific issues faced by the tribunals as a result are reversed. Namely, the supranational tribunals have a transnational perspective on the cross-cutting actors, facts, and claims, but must engage the subnational and national dimensions of them through governmental and nongovernmental entities at those levels. The space created by the tribunals, and in particular the limited standing they provide for non-state actors, further shapes the geographic picture. Even tribunals such as the ones considering the above petitions, which allow for petitions from non-state actors, only allow the actions to be brought against the nation-states which are parties to the treaties that constitute them. Moreover, beyond the general issues of the enforceability of international judgments that lack the state’s police powers behind them, many of the relevant tribunals have not been granted the power to provide binding judgments.

282. See Belize Petition, supra note 257; Nepal Petition, supra note 257; Peru Petition, supra note 257. See also Australia Report, supra note 258, at 1–6.
283. See World Heritage Convention, supra note 278, arts. 8–14.
284. See Ososky, supra note 8, at 100 n.122 (citing provisions of several human rights conventions that provide this limitation).
The geography of supranational climate change actions thus varies significantly from that of subnational and national ones. Although supranational actions aim at the same type of problems as the subnational and national cases, they generally involve individuals and nongovernmental organizations making claims against nation-states for a failure to regulate. This spatial structure—and the tribunals’ reliance on national-level and sometimes subnational-level regulatory power—shapes the possibilities for influence of actions on this level.

VII. TOWARDS A REGULATORY MODEL

The above maps provide insight into the existing regulatory terrain. Except in the case in which corporate entities and representatives attempt to limit regulation, the climate change litigation studied represents an effort to fill perceived regulatory gaps. The lawsuits provide a mechanism for many of the interested parties to engage regulatory questions more directly than legislative or executive decision-making processes generally allow. They also provide a space in which actors operating at different levels and from different branches can dialogue together.

The flexibility and variety of judicial fora, however, also constrains the role of this litigation. The geography detailed in Parts IV through VI places decision-makers in the position of needing to make appropriate judgments in the same three-dimensional morass that confronts other actors. The complexity of these actions, combined with their novelty, creates a potential for confusion that adds to uncertainty over whether this type of litigation can serve as an effective regulatory tool.

More fundamentally, this geography raises questions about whether regulatory gap-filling is the most useful way of viewing these efforts, and if so, how else these regulatory gaps might possibly be filled. The transnational treaty regime on climate change does not include the most significant greenhouse gas contributor—the United States—as a party to its more specific limitations. And even the agreement that provides those limitations, the Kyoto Protocol, has been criticized as insufficient. Moreover, lawyers and policy-makers are still grappling with how to...
translate a belief that climate change needs to be addressed into effective regulatory approaches. The most ambitious implementation measures at national and subnational levels often fail to meet their emissions reduction goals despite well-organized and focused efforts.291

An engagement of these questions allows a necessary conceptual shift from describing the existing terrain to engaging its normative implications. This Part begins an exploration of these issues as a jumping off point for a companion article that sketches a proposed law and geography approach to transnational regulation of cross-cutting environmental problems like climate change. In particular, the geographic terrain represented by climate change litigation invites a normative inquiry into identity questions. At the most basic level, this terrain reframes how the litigation might be viewed, or in geographic terms, raises issues about the space the litigation should be viewed as occupying. An exploration of that space paves the way for a dialogue about other spaces underlying it, such as those occupied by core actors. Such an analysis also provides the basis for engaging the cultural discourse underlying those spaces.

A. Transnational Litigative Spaces

The literature at the intersection of international law and international relations regarding the process of making and enforcing transnational law provides multiple conceptions of the space that litigation occupies within it. For example, a scholar relying on a transnational judicial process approach would likely view climate change litigation as part of the vertical process through which “interaction, interpretation, and internalization” promote obedience to law. 292 A transgovernmentalist might focus in on this litigation as an instance of nascent judicial globalization; although these tribunals do not directly interact, they collectively become part of the transgovernmental networks that undergird disaggregated sovereign discourse.293


293. See Anne-Marie Slaughter, Judicial Globalization, 40 VA. J. INT’L L. 1103 (describing this
A law and geography approach to understanding the value and potential role of climate change litigation uses the ties to place and underlying spatial constructs—and their evolution over time—as a starting point for the normative inquiry. Choosing a framing—whether transnational judicial process, transgovernmentalism, or an alternative theoretical approach—defines the conceptual space this litigation occupies and, as a result, suggests how it should be valued. This process must originate from an understanding of ties to place and how that space engages them.

The normative inquiry about climate change litigation as part of the process of transnational regulation would be thickened by exploring how a spatial model represented by a theoretical approach might map onto the geographic terrain represented and vice versa. Such an approach would engage the overlaps and disconnects among different approaches to litigative spaces, as well as questions of how this litigation should be viewed in the broader scheme of transnational regulatory governance. The insights from geography thus provide a framework for comparing existing theoretical approaches as defining narratives for climate change litigation.

B. Key Actors and Litigative Spaces

A disaggregation of the first inquiry leads the way to a second cluster of issues revolving around the actors that participate in climate change litigation. The actors’ geography reflects that they all have layered, evolving identities, and that this litigation provides a forum for a multifaceted interchange. Moreover, the petitioners, respondents, and adjudicators each occupy different—and often multiple—spaces on the interrelated axes of power described in Part III.B.

The interchanges among key actors about multiscalar issues help to define how climate change litigation should be viewed. To the extent that there is a dynamic cycle among the actors and the process of litigation, an inquiry into the space this litigation should occupy helps to define our construction of the actors, which in terms helps to redefine the space. This nuanced dance, for example, forms a core part of the story that both transnational legal process and transgovernmentalism tell.295

294. See supra note 41 and accompanying text.
Because those actors have ties to specific places that form a key part of who they are, a geographic understanding of transnational litigation provides a more specific account of its role. The actors connect through webs of space, place, and time, with climate change litigation serving as one mode of interaction among them. A focus on a geopolitical conception of the actors thus allows a more complete conception of the space that the litigation occupies.

C. Identity and Culture

With this inquiry into the spaces that litigation and its key actors should be viewed as occupying, questions of culture and identity emerge. The Inuit on whose behalf the Inter-American petition was filed, for example, are simultaneously members of indigenous peoples connected to specific localities with long-standing cultural traditions, citizens under multiple levels and forms of government, and members of a broader supranational organization representing interconnected indigenous peoples. Each of these identities is place-specific, but also locates the Inuit petitioners in multiple cultural dialogues. A definition of the spaces those petitioners and that petition occupy would be incomplete if not informed by that cultural content, which includes exploring cultural dissent embodied in the framing of and interaction through the petition process.

Geography provides a theoretical terrain which helps to integrate the first two inquiries with this third piece. Cultural geographers, for example, engage the implications of the dynamics between local and global for “the relationships between identity, meaning and place.” A law and geography lens thus allows for dynamics among place, space, time, culture, identity, and law to interweave with the geopolitical analysis of the litigation and its actors.


297. For an exploration of a cultural-dissent approach to cultural conflict and its relationship to law, see Madhavi Sunder, Cultural Dissent, 54 STAN L. REV. 495 (2001); see also Madhavi Sunder, Piercing the Veil, 112 YALE L.J. 1399 (2003) (analyzing the interaction of law and culture in the context of women’s human rights activists who work in Muslim communities and countries).

VIII. CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

The complicated problems of regulating the transnational energy industry represent a significant departure from the primacy of state power at the time of the Treaty of Westphalia. Mapping climate change litigation provides a window into the power dynamics that influence the current regulatory process. Examining the whirling dervish of interested entities highlights the complexity of addressing these externalities, but it also provides a path for making progress.

Despite the three-dimensional morass the spatial analysis unveils, much of the fundamental framework of state sovereignty and equality remains and can help shape a modern approach to effective transnational environmental regulation. In their legislative, executive, and judicial capacities, governmental actors are playing a critical role in shaping a transnational regulatory process and dancing between domestic and international law.299 An understanding of the multidimensional, intertwined relationships allows for more targeted, effective approaches to such litigation and broader questions of corporate responsibility.

Achieving effective regulation rests on the ability to create strategies that incorporate the multiple dimensions involved. Such strategies must rely upon governmental power, but a thick version of this power that views the nation-state in context. As Part VII suggests, this Article’s descriptive analysis provides a context for a normative law and geography exploration of climate change litigation, its core actors, and issues of identity and culture. The interweaving of international law, international relations, and geography allows an engagement of this type of litigation as part of a broader dialogue about transnational regulatory approaches. The companion article that follows this one will build upon this piece’s analysis to explore these issues.

299. Scholarly debate continues over how much of the framework remains. See, e.g., sources cited supra note 82. The key role of nation-states in this litigation suggests that a workable model of transnational regulation must engage a thick version of nation-state regulatory authority, a version I plan to explore in more depth in the companion piece.