Conclusion

With the exception of Germany in the most recent period, no government has tried seriously to take environmental concern into the process of policy making. Specific environmental disputes and the occasional environmental issue may have prompted government action (such as the banning of CFCs, the saving of particular areas of forest, the creation of game reserves or the regulation of pollution); but mostly whatever has been done has been done to accommodate rising levels of environmental concern and to protect the demands of economic development and economic growth. The way in which the accommodation between growth and concern has been constructed has varied from the cosmetic to the opportunist, with rare attempts to develop and embed rules that cover the best way to manage the impact of economic development on environments. With strategies of incorporation and accommodation to the force, there has been plenty of scope for more comprehensive environmental critiques to develop and more radical forms of environmental politics to arise as environmentalists see their concerns marginalised or ignored.

Further reading


3 Environmental politics in social movements

- Social movement theories
- Different environmental movements
- ‘North’ and ‘South’
- Global ecology

Introduction

Environmentalism, in all its forms, was born in environmental movements. There are many theories about what makes up a social movement, and some of these are outlined in this chapter. At the outset, what needs to be understood is that social movements are largely non-institutional. They occupy a political terrain that is often quite separate from more established institutionalised political forms such as pressure groups, parties, and the administrative and parliamentary systems of the state. It was within these non-institutional, more informal realms of society and its politics that environmental movements emerged. It is safe to say that without the environmental movements there would be little or no ‘greening’ of government and corporations.

Until the relatively recent upsurge of literature written on new social movements (NSMs), comparatively little has been written about this more informal realm of politics. Traditional political science has largely ignored the politics of everyday life, doubting that it is important enough to warrant analysis. Social movement theorists, however, believe that more new and transforming ideas begin life in non-institutional politics. This creative ‘politics of the people’ is evident in dynamic, amorphous networks, associations, grass-roots groups and alliances (Doyle 2000). Rarely is this dimension governed by formal laws and statutes of association, such as constitutions.
The next chapter also includes an investigation of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in environmental politics. While still treated as non-institutional politics in this work, some NGOs cross the non-institutional/institutional divide. These NGOs have legitimised themselves through the adoption of constitutions, setting rules of conduct and defining organisational goals. They are, in this sense, formal political institutions. To a degree, the adoption of a constitution symbolises that they are willing to work within established rules and social norms. Such NGOs are as formal as non-institutional politics gets. Considerable tensions surround the relationships of NGOs to the non-institutionalised grassroots groups and networks of social movements on the one hand, and the institutions of the state on the other. For this work, NGOs are treated as being a constituent part of social movements, along with other sub-groupings such as networks and informal groups, rather than existing as an entirely separate phenomenon.

What are social movements?

Before it is possible to analyse the dynamic and diverse character of environmental movements, it is necessary to establish some of the general characteristics of social movements. ‘Social movements’ is a term used to refer to the form in which new combinations of people inject themselves into politics and challenge dominant ideas and a given constellation of power. The nineteenth-century labour movement is a good example. Here people who found themselves confronting harsh industrial working conditions joined together in a myriad of small organisations or combinations to press for changes, from their bosses and from the state. In Britain, for example, such ‘combination’ and ‘oath taking’ was illegal; workers did not have the right to organise or the right to vote, and defence of the rights of private property was of great importance to the state. Nonetheless, workers struggled for a vision of a better future, achieved their basic goals, transformed the rules upon which the system was run and ended up incorporated into the changed social order. The labour movement did not achieve its radical goals, or the overthrow of capitalism, but it did change the system to the extent that it and its concerns went from being excluded to being included.

In contemporary parlance, this labour movement would be seen as an example of an old social movement in contrast to the ‘new’ social movements, which include both the women’s movement and the environmental movement. These are new in the sense that they challenge a new set of dominant ideas and another constellation of power. There are new issues and concerns to be injected into the political process. Like the preceding social movements they have a radical edge and visions of a world transformed by their demands. Their radicalism is heightened by their awareness of what happened before: that radical movements ended up being incorporated and their issues and passions tamed. New social movements are characterised by their informal modes of organisation; their attachment to changing values as a central part of their political challenge; their commitment to open and ultra-democratic, participating modes of organisation (at least in the initial stages); and their willingness to engage in direct action to stop outcomes that they see as harmful. It has certainly been the intention of these movements to disrupt the taken-for-granted routines of normal politics and to push other considerations to the fore.

The new social movements often take up themes left over from models constructed in earlier eras and give them new emphasis and meaning. Such was the case with the re-invigoration of feminist politics, the peace movement and anti-nuclear campaigns. In some ways a revised environmental politics was the same. Environmental campaigns had existed before, even in the early stages of industrialisation, and regulations had been imposed to limit pollution, largely on health grounds. From the 1970s onwards a revitalised environmental movement began working through a whole array of local and national networks and organisations to press its claims. Often there were direct actions, such as blockades, marches and rallies, as well as quieter attempts to lobby for policy changes and new initiatives. It is the whole array of these activities that is the subject of this and the next two chapters.

Why do social movements happen?

There are many theories about the origins and character of social movements. There is now a recognised split between what has become known as the ‘American’ and ‘European’ approaches (Morris and Herring 1987; Klandermans and Tarrow 1988; Neidhardt and Ruef 1990; Diani 1992). Although there are important exceptions in both categories, this division can be usefully employed here. The American theories of collective behaviour, resource mobilisation, and those which relate to political process are largely action and actor centred, while the European theorists are more ‘structural’ in their accounts (Diani 1992: 3–4).
Although there are important and fundamental differences between the American schools of thought, many of their advocates also insist on a shared teleological dimension, amongst other things, tying participants together; defining the movement (Doyle 2000). The most significant of these have their roots in the sociological theories of the Chicago School (Princen and Finger 1994: 48). Princen and Finger write:

Social movement theory goes back to psychosociology and the study of individual behaviour within groups. Collective action, according to this theory, can be triggered in various ways, depending essentially upon the theoretical framework to which one refers. One can distinguish three main schools. All of them are fundamentally ahistorical. Indeed, collective action can occur either as a result of relative deprivation, as a strategy to articulate common interests, or as a response to economic or political conflicts. In a political context the purpose of collective action is social change.

(ibid.: 48–9)

In collective action theories, individuals are treated as rationally responding to forms of deprivation or to some newly presented opportunity for political success. Such situations usually occur when there is ‘rapid social change’ (Oberschall 1993: 18). In these circumstances traditional relationships and ideas are challenged, sometimes giving rise to social movements. Oberschall writes:

In this view, a period of rapid social change – due to industrial growth and economic transformation, urban growth and rural decline, an economic depression, the aftermath of a lost war, rapid population growth, and the like – will weaken and undermine stable groups and communities. ... As social bonds weaken and traditional answers and remedies no longer work, the population will manifest signs of increasing disorganization ... they participate in major social, political, and religious movements that seek to reform and restructure institutions.

(ibid.: 18)

Basically, these collective action theorists believe that something must go substantially ‘wrong’ for people to coalesce into new social movements (Box 3.1).

Collective action theories tend to be very general and ahistorical in their accounts of the development of either old or new social movements.

The more European tradition, which is often referred to as the New Social Movement (NSM) approach, has not placed such an emphasis on commonality of purpose, though this still sometimes emerges (see Touraine 1981). Instead, these theorists stress the importance of network as the defining factor of this modern social phenomenon. Donati writes:

Collective identity can only be formed through concrete and significant interaction between individuals. Its bargaining and its formation are carried out through pre-existing ties and networks, through everyday relationships and collective identities which are always present in the social system and which come to be changed and reshaped through the bargaining process.

(Donati 1984: 837–59)

These more recent, European (and often Italian: Melucci, Donati, Della Porta, and Diani) theories place less emphasis on the goal orientation of movements; but rather prefer to portray them as a cluttering of multidirectional, three-dimensional informal networks. What is interesting about these theories is that they argue that the existence of these networks is a necessary pre-condition to the formation of symbolic identity, rather than the networks coalescing around a pre-existing series of rational goals. In considering new social movements, it is important to pay attention to the circumstances in which they arise and to the specific characteristics of both the participants and their goals. There are two broad explanations of this type: one that focuses on post-materialist values and one that focuses on the experiences of a post-industrial world.

One of the most significant and pervasive accounts of the origins of the new social movements has emphasised a ‘value shift’ in society explained in terms of a post-materialism thesis.

**Box 3.1**

**Four factors prompting collective action**

1. Changes in the basic conditions of life to produce discontent.
2. Changes in beliefs and values.
3. Changes in the capacity to act collectively.

Source: Adapted from Oberschall (1993: 17).
Environmental movements, for example, are seen as possessing post-materialist values that directly contest, in a paradigmatic battle, the dominant materialist values of modern society. This argument is commonly identified with the writings of Inglehart (1977, 1990; see also Papadakis 1993). Strongly premised on Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs' (1954), the post-materialist argument is that having largely fulfilled the more basic needs of safety and security, parts of advanced industrial society are able to pursue the 'higher', more luxuriant causes, such as love and a sense of belonging, beyond the old politics of material existence. Inglehart states:

A process of intergenerational value change is gradually transforming the politics and cultural norms of advanced industrial societies. A shift from Materialist to Postmaterialist value priorities has brought new political issues to the center of the stage and provided much of the impetus for new political movements... from giving top priority to physical sustenance and safety toward heavier emphasis on belonging, self-expression, and the quality of life.

(1990: 66)

It is accepted that some environmental movements do seek post-materialist values and express their politics in these terms. In parts of the more affluent world, arguments relating to the aesthetic values of nature, non-human rights, the spirituality of place, and an emphasis on holism and ecology would seem to fit the post-materialist hypothesis. It should be noted, however, that not all First World environmental movements are either predicated on or seeking post-materialist values. In addition, in poorer parts of the world environmental movements can be effectively based on those old survival/security needs in situations made worse by extreme environmental degradation. The struggles of the Ogoni people in Nigeria against pollution caused by Shell are a case in point. So, whatever the strengths and weaknesses of the post-materialist thesis, it can only explain a little about the origins and character of the environmental movement.

An alternative account of the origins of environmental movements is based on the thesis of post-industrialism. This position argues that advanced industrialism, championed by both the market systems of latter-day capitalism and the state-centred models of Soviet-style socialism, has pushed the Earth, its habitats and its species (including humans) to the brink of extinction. This industrial/development paradigm has promoted economic growth at all costs. Initially this pursuit of growth was rooted deeply in the Enlightenment project of the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions, the pursuit of progress, and improved living standards for all. The environment, and nature, was presented as a cornucopia of unlimited resources and abundance. The environmental costs of growth were either not recognised or treated as incidentals in the gaining of a greater good.

In more recent times, industrialism has become global and there is widespread (if partial) acceptance of natural constraints to growth, but the Enlightenment project continues. It still advocates increased growth but now this should be bolstered by improvements in environmental efficiency and management, the promotion of the global 'free market', and the advocacy of homogeneous 'democratic', pluralist political systems. Carl Boggs writes from the post-industrialist perspective:

To the degree that the radicalism of new social movements tends to flow from the deep crisis of industrial society, its roots are generally indigenous and organic, making it naturally resistant to totalistic ideologies that galvanized the Second and Third Internationals... the eclipse of the industrial growth model, the threat of nuclear catastrophe, bureaucratization, destruction of natural habitat, social anomie - cannot be expected to disappear simply through the good intentions of political leaders.

(1986: 23)

For writers like Boggs, the post-industrial setting generates a unique social and political climate that promotes the formation of new social movements (NSMs). As a result, the defining characteristics of these movements differ from those that went before in terms of class, and ideological and organisational characteristics. (These differences have been summarised in Box 3.2.)

Boggs argues that NSMs are less likely to be co-opted than movements existing prior to the 1970s, although it is difficult to see why this is more than a hope on his part. Post-industrialist theorists, however, argue that current problems are so profound that they cannot be routinised into normal politics. It is true that some parts of green movements retain their opposition to dominant institutions. But it is also true that other parts have been readily co-opted and many co-operate with government as a way of being politically effective. As with the old social movements, incorporation into a new status quo is likely to be the product of external struggles both within environmental movements and between these movements, business and the state.

General theories of social movements, old and new, should be treated as tools, rather than models into which all experience can be forced. In some
Box 3.2

Eight characteristics of new social movements

1. NSMs do not bear a clear relation to the structural roles of the participants. There is a tendency in NSMs to transcend class structure. More important are the different social strata provided by youth, gender, sexual orientation and professions.

2. Ideologically, NSMs are profoundly different from the Marxist perception of ideology as a unifying and totalising element for collective action. NSMs exhibit a multitude of ideas and values.

3. NSMs often involve the emergence of new dimensions of identity. The grievances are based on a set of beliefs, symbols, values and meanings, rather than on the economic grievances that characterised the working-class movements.

4. The relationship between the individual and the collective is blurred. Many contemporary movements are ‘acted out’ in individual actions rather than through or among mobilised groups. The movement becomes the focus for the individual’s definition of himself or herself, and action within the movement is a complex mix of the collective and individual confirmations of identity.

5. NSMs often involve personal and intimate aspects of human life, e.g. what we eat, wear and enjoy.

6. NSMs use the radical mobilisation tactics of resistance, which differ from those practised in working-class movements, characterised by civil disobedience and non-violence.

7. There is disdain on behalf of NSMs for conventional politics. Consequently NSMs maintain elements of autonomy from traditional mass parties.

8. NSMs seem to be segmented, diffuse and decentralised. There is a tendency toward considerable local autonomy of local sections. (This point is developed at some length in the next section devoted to the ‘structure’ of the environment movement.)

Source: Adapted from Johnston, Larana and Gusfield (1992: 6–9).

Organisation and structure in environmental movements

Environmental movements vary greatly in both their general and specific objectives as well as in their internal structures and modes of organisation. It is important to consider how these movements hold together internally and the extent to which they coalesce to form more coherent organisations.

When looking at the sprawling activities of environmental movements, political scientists have attempted to use, among other things, pluralist interest group models. But social movements are not just large interest groups or organisations. They are far more complex, are often more diverse, highly informal, amorphous in their structures, and constantly undergoing substantial redefinition (Doyle 1986; Doyle and Kellow 1995). Because interest group models treat collective political action as being driven by shared goals (that is, it is assumed what needs to be analysed), this has inhibited our understanding of the often fascinating mechanics and structures of the more informal relationships that are characteristic of a social movement.

A vast array of informal groups, formal organisations, networks and individuals is involved in each environmental movement. This fragmentation is a reflection of a broad range of differing political ideals and policy goals, and consequent means for achieving them. It also reveals the segmented, diffuse and amorphous nature of the movement’s structure. For Pakulski:

Structures include patterns of links between movement specific groups and organisations, as well as groups and organisations drawn into the orbit of movement activities, but formed independently of them (e.g. political parties, religious bodies, ethnic organisations).

(1991: 32)

For this very reason, it is not possible to ascertain the exact number of environmental groups operating at any one time. The movement is in a constant state of flux. As issues appear on the political agenda, groups often form. As the issue in question disappears from public view, the group may fade away also. Membership is fluid. Each movement comprises many individuals who are not necessarily ‘card-carrying’ members of specific environmental organisations. Hence, the overall membership, when defined by different individuals or groups, varies accordingly.
Due to their fragmented nature, a study of the structure of specific movements is an extremely complicated one. There are five different structural forms that dominate movement activity (see Figure 3.1). Each one of these forms has distinct features, and a given environmental movement is made up of the sum of these different structures. The term ‘palimpsest’ has been utilised to produce a visual representation of this complex set of combinations (Doyle 1991: 3; Doyle and Kellow 1995). Doyle and Kellow write:

The primary reason for using this word from the Greek is that it has a semantic definition which is useful in the visual presentation of the proposed model. A palimpsest is a parchment from which writing had been imperfectly erased to make room for another text. The net result of this practice is a document with several manuscripts still visible, mapped unevenly onto each other.

(ibid.: 90)

The appropriateness of this analogy seems most apparent in terms of the structure of environmental movements, with their three-dimensional space and different levels of political activity found and labelled within them. Individuals are linked by interconnecting lines on the diagram.

These links depict many, varied networks of individuals. Each network is different as its definition relies on the perceptions, biases and power plays of the initiator(s). The key differential variable of the network, however, is the common goal(s) or ideology that bind(s) the participants together. In most cases these goals or shared values are specifically issue-oriented, whether based on an environmental campaign or a particular type of political system.

These interconnecting lines ignore organisational and group boundaries. For these networks are fundamentally concerned with relationships between individuals operating inside and outside other formal and informal collective forms. Consequently, on occasions, these networks do not intersect with any formal organisational or informal group members. Instead, these links may indicate information exchange and other informal activity. It is these networks that provide the cement which both directly and indirectly links the different parts of the movements together.

Positioned between the levels of the network and the organisation is the group. The ‘group’ shares certain similarities with the network. The

Figure 3.1 The palimpsest (Doyle 1991; Doyle and Kellow 1995)
group, however, is more permanent than the network; its relationships have become more solidified over time. As a symbol of the more stable status of the group, each group has a perennial title. The creation of a collective, invariant title that symbolises the politics of the individuals and differentiates them from others is a unifying characteristic of groups. The group also differs from the organisation, which is the fourth level of the palimpsest. It is portrayed on the diagram as a solid, continuous line, symbolising the rigidity and the permanency of its well-defined, often hierarchical structure. These organisations (or NGOs) are the focus of the next chapter and are a component part of social movements. Pivotal to this concept is a vision of a movement existing as some sort of collection of concentric circles, with the organisations (or NGOs) occupying the centre, and all others inhabiting the outer periphery. This is a rather insubstantial perception of what a social movement is, and it illustrates the biases of the organisational sociologist at work. Instead, Piven and Cloward have a far more acceptable, though less defined, differentiation between movements and formal organisations. They state: 

The stress on conscious intentions in these usages reflects a confusion in the literature between the mass movement on the one hand, and the formalised organisations which tend to emerge on the crest of the movement on the other hand – two intertwined but distinct phenomena.

(1979: 5)

The final, and most recently applied, ‘manuscript’ is at the level of the movement. Each movement is represented on the palimpsest as a square frame. This frame symbolises the boundaries set by each individual. These boundaries are continually changing with time, as are the different forms of individual, group, organisational and network perceptual boundaries.

Environmental movements, therefore, are overarching political forms that include actors advocating all of the diverse eco-philosophies and positions (and many more) touched upon in the previous chapter.

Varieties of environmental movement

Despite the incredible variety of environmental movements operating in countries around the globe, it is still possible to produce a description of the different types of movement and their most common geo-political location and prominence. Such an account cannot be all-inclusive. It is necessary to select the most characteristic forms to use as examples. Th means, of course, that there will be a serious degree of simplification an that examples to contradict the generalisation will easily be found. The purpose here is to give a broad-brush account to help locate the character and actions of any particular movement.

Western European environmental movements

Some of the most dramatic, well-publicised and much discussed environmental movements are to be found in Western Europe. There are two major kinds. First, there is the very traditional nature conservation movement. Second, there are the political ecology and anti-nuclear movements, characterised by some writers as part of the ‘New Left’ (Box 3.3).

There is a major difference between the kind of environmental politics embraced by these two different movements or networks. The nature conservation movement sought ‘protection within the existing economic order’ (Lowe and Goyder 1983; Rohrschneider 1991: 254). This movement ‘proposes reform’ by playing politics with a ‘green tinge’. Th political ecology and anti-nuclear movements demanded systemic change, placing ecological and social objectives above economic concerns.

The nature conservation movement accepted current distribution patterns of both power and economic resources. Both the political ecology and anti-nuclear movements argued for resource conservation along with a more equitable distribution of those resources. The characteristic style of politics of these two groupings was substantially different. Despite the fact that activists within these movements recognise and use, often in mutual criticism, the differences between these political traditions, the public sees both as just part of ‘one environmental syndrome’ (Rohrschneider 1991: 251–66).

North American environmental movements

Whereas most significant Western European environmental movements have been rooted in anti-nuclear energy issues and the politics of human and political ecology, environmental movements in the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and some parts of Scandinavia have be
Box 3.3

Major thrusts in Western European movements

Nature conservation movement

The oldest branch of the environmental movement is the nature conservation movement, whose origins significantly preceded the evolution of the Western European ecology and anti-nuclear energy movements. One of the main motives of the nature conservation movement during the nineteenth century was to preserve visible signs of human history in a rapidly modernising world. Other traditional thrusts included bird preservation. More recently, the contemporary nature conservation movement is motivated by pollution problems.

Political ecology movement

This movement emerged at the end of the 1960s in reaction to problems of industrialised societies. There was a strong urban focus, as well as attempts to protect relatively untouched ‘natural’ areas. By the mid-1970s, environmental organisations usually controlled their operations. As Western European traditional parties were unwilling to incorporate their needs into the governmental process, they formed their own political parties (see Chapter 5). Also in the 1970s, with close ties to other new social movements, it developed the ‘new environmental paradigm’ view, which included, apart from ecological concerns over economic growth, a critique of science and technology, and a preference for participatory politics. Although there was an interest in the welfare of other species, there was a strong anthropocentric ‘human ecological approach’, with a ‘nation-state’ political focus.

Anti-nuclear movement

Although characterised as a New Left movement, in association with the previous category, this movement was primarily born of the desire to shut down power plants in Western Europe (Whyl and Brokdorf in W. Germany and Creys-Malville in France). Also, it attempted to promote the importance of the nuclear energy debate in European politics. It was one of the most radical, unconventional political players in the New Left environmental movement, with an emphasis on un-co-ordinated, decentralised actions. On the whole, it did not attempt to play neo-corporatist, formal organisational and partisan politics.

Source: Adapted from Rohrschneider (1991).

dominated by wilderness-oriented perspectives with an emphasis on the ‘importance of place’. These are not unlike Western European nature conservation movements but with less emphasis on the preservation of the built environment. Whereas the political ecologists of Western Europe have advocated wide-ranging social change along the lines of the four pillars outlined by the German Greens (participatory democracy, social equity, non-violence and ecology) wilderness-oriented movements have been dominated by a concern with ecology. Part of the reason for this is obvious. These countries still have large tracts of relatively ‘undeveloped wilderness’ (Eckersley 1990: 70) that can be saved, and a suitably large portion of the population is rich enough to define environmental concern in this way.

What is the environmental movement in the United States like? Obviously, at different times, in different places, the movement has had a variety of different concerns. On the east coast, with such a high population density, it has been impossible to escape from the human element in ecology. Consequently, air- and water-quality issues are rated highly. Unlike the political and human ecology movements, radical, systemic political change is rarely proposed by the movement, dominated as it is by powerful non-governmental organisations (the subject of the next chapter). These NGOs construe nature in a rather limited, instrumental fashion, not unlike the view of government bureaucrats and the corporate think-tanks with which they often work. The ‘environmental crisis’ is not really seen as a crisis at all but as a challenge for better management. Environmental problems, in this sense, are seen as efficiency optimisation projects played out in the marketplace.

The overriding focus in the western regions of the United States (and this dominates the national agenda) is on wilderness issues. Eocentric arguments abound in the United States: forest wilderness issues; the reintroduction of mega-fauna (like wolves, grizzly bears and elk); and the ‘management’ of national parks. With so much emphasis on non-human nature (from both instrumental and intrinsic value positions) there has been little recognition of the fact that humanity is also part of nature.

The mainstream environmental movement in the United States is profoundly apolitical in both the way it perceives and the way it plays environmental politics when compared with the Western European tradition (see Box 3.4).

Networks of social ecologists (described in Chapter 2) provide a counterpoint to the more powerful deep ecologists and resource
Box 3.4

North American environmentalism

1 Environmentalism is not really seen as inclusive of a human political dimension.

2 There is little critique of existing political systems.

3 Its pluralist system (see Chapter 1) is so dominant that people do not perceive it as a political model, but rather reality. In this political system, citizens are seen, in their natural state as apolitical. The environmental movement has not been able to escape these dominant cultural perceptions.

4 With such a heavy emphasis on the pluralist model, all citizens are seen as capable of gaining equal access to political power. But to do so, citizens must join a formalised interest group, recognised as 'legitimate' by the state. This leads to a profound reliance on political lobbying.

5 This lobbying emphasis has, in turn, led to big environmentalism. Power environmental NGOs have surfaced and dominate movement initiatives. These NGOs mimic the bureaucratic politics of Washington, as well as being firmly entrenched in the boardrooms of corporate America.

6 With the heavy emphasis on the apolitical individual, the environmental movement has also fought many battles through the legal system. This has seen the development of a plethora of one-off victories, but has not seen the emergence of a permanent parliamentary or administrative environmental response. For example, the success of green parties in the United States is virtually non-existent, and there is no cabinet level portfolio in national government.

7 Another consequence of this apolitical individualism is an attraction to new age environmentalism (outside of the big environmentalism of the large NGOs). This form of environmentalism seeks to change values from within the individual. Often these changes are psychological and spiritual. The argument is that individuals must change their inward relationships to nature. Whilst some of these points are salient, unfortunately, they further divorce the movement from the political realm which requires an interplay between social groupings; not just within the individual.

8 Where radical change has been voiced (by such organisations as Earth First!) there has been a heavy emphasis on direct, sometimes militant, piece-meal actions.

9 It lacks an international/global dimension. It remains transfixed by domestic, environmental issues.

Environmental movements of Eastern Europe

The division between Western and Eastern Europe, prior to 'the end of the Cold War', was a key division between liberal democracies with capitalist economies and those countries whose politics was based on authoritarian, state-centred models of socialism.

Before the mid-1980s, there was no environmental movement in Eastern Europe to compare with those in the West. Under authoritarian regimes it is difficult to measure the extent of support for any social movement. There are always movements that remain more or less 'underground' during this period of harsh rule, ready to emerge and flourish when conditions improve. It is interesting to note that it is the non-institutional form of politics that sustains movements under repressive regimes. As discussed in Chapter 1, few NGOs, political parties or other formalised centres of opposition are tolerated in these regimes. Instead, informal networks, groups and associations provide the lifeblood of the social movement's existence. There are no easily defined leaders, no easily located epicentres, and no clear patterns of association to be suppressed.
Box 3.5

Principles of environmental justice


Preamble

We, the people of color, gathered together at this multinational People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, to begin to build a national and international movement of all peoples of color to fight the destruction and taking of our lands and communities, do hereby re-establish our spiritual interdependence to the sacredness of our Mother Earth; to respect and celebrate each of our cultures, languages and beliefs about the natural world and our roles in healing ourselves; to insure environmental justice; to promote economic alternatives which would contribute to the development of environmentally safe livelihoods; and, to secure our political, economic and cultural liberation that has been denied for over 500 years of colonization and oppression, resulting in the poisoning of our communities and land and the genocide of our peoples, do affirm and adopt these Principles of Environmental Justice:

1. **Environmental justice** affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction.

2. **Environmental justice** demands that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias.

3. **Environmental justice** mandates the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living things.

4. **Environmental justice** calls for universal protection from industrial by-products and the extraction, production and disposal of toxic/hazardous wastes and poisons that threaten the fundamental right to clean air, land, water, and food.

5. **Environmental justice** affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination of all peoples.

6. **Environmental justice** demands the cessation of the production of all toxins, hazardous wastes, and radioactive materials, and that all past and current producers be held strictly accountable to the people for detoxification and the containment at the point of production.

7. **Environmental justice** demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.

8. **Environmental justice** affirms the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment, without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood and unemployment. It also affirms the right of those who work at home to be free from environmental hazards.

9. **Environmental justice** protects the rights of victims of environmental injustice to receive full compensation and reparations for damages as well as quality health care.


11. **Environmental justice** must recognize a special legal and natural relationship of Native Peoples to the U.S. government through treaties, agreements, compacts, and covenants affirming sovereignty and self-determination.

12. **Environmental justice** affirms the need for urban and rural ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities and rural areas in balance with nature, honoring the cultural integrity of all our communities, and providing fair access for all to the full range of resources.

13. **Environmental justice** calls for the strict enforcement of principles of informed consent, and a halt to the testing of experimental reproductive and medical procedures and vaccinations on people of color.

14. **Environmental justice** opposes the destructive operations of multi-national corporations.

15. **Environmental justice** opposes military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, peoples and cultures, and other life forms.

16. **Environmental justice** calls for the education of present and future generations which emphasizes social and environmental issues, based on our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives.

17. **Environmental justice** requires that we, as individuals, make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of Mother Earth’s resources and to produce as little waste as possible; and make the conscious decision to challenge and re-prioritize our lifestyles to insure the health of the natural world for present and future generations.

Szabo, in the context of Hungary’s greens, writes of this ‘structure’ of politics:

The Hungarian ecology movement was born in the mid 1980s, but, given the constraints of mobilizing under the one-party state, it never attained an integrated organization. Rather, it existed in the form of unconnected local citizens’ initiatives, single-issue groups, and alternative lifestyle communities. Unlike ecology movements in
Environmental politics in social movements

On the one hand, social forces have ‘unlimited possibilities’ for articulating new issues because the inertia of official politics recasts any challenge in terms of the broader drama of democracy versus authoritarianism. In Eastern Europe, the result was the existence of some very limited initiatives that had public and intellectual significance disproportionate to the small number of supporters. These small, powerless groups could become capable of articulating very important – even crucial – but neglected sociopolitical issues. On the other hand, mobilization under authoritarian systems is hampered by the administrative-bureaucratic environment and the use of legal and illegal means of social control.

In the early phases, aided by the new tolerance of the 1980s, environmentalists were well received by the broader populus as champions of democracy and dissent. In the case of Hungary, the protest against the building of an Austrian-funded dam on a Hungarian section the Danube provided a symbolic epicentre not only for the ‘ecologists’, but for many other forces of ‘democracy’ (ibid.). Environmentalism has been used for many disparate purposes. On this occasion, it was used to undermine an authoritarian communist regime. Interestingly, as the ‘velvet’ revolutions took place, green forces became accepted as ‘legitimate’ and were quickly absorbed into the mainstream politics of new quasi-pluralist systems. Many green interests were accommodated the new political parties (see Chapter 5). With the demise of state socialism, most people in the East saw more pressing issues than those they narrowly construed as environmental. They were eager to move to the ‘free-market’ systems of the West, and growth and democratisation were portrayed as the key to the East’s success. The arguments of post-industrial theorists ceased to be heard. The environmental movement served its purpose in the transition period. Chatterjee and Finger observe

Not surprisingly, in a highly politicized society and at a highly political moment, the Green movement in the East was first and foremost a political movement with political, i.e. national agendas. Be it in Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, or Estonia, the Green movements turned rapidly into green parties, which in turn quickly acquired a share of national power. But once this had taken place, the Green movement declined. In retrospect, it turns out that the Green movement in the East was instrumental in the transition of the Eastern European countries to a market economy. Yet despite enormous ecological problems facing the East, in the 1990s the Green movement has substantially lost momentum.

(1994: 287)
But this judgement seems too certain and too early. Some networks within the green movement have not been co-opted by mainstream politics and have remained a vibrant though informal voice in Eastern Europe. This level of non-institutional politics may not be as ‘visible’ or as ‘reportable’ as its more institutional counterpart. It is fluid, amorphous and flexible. Those concerned by the evidence of environmental degradation continue their efforts to change the way in which these new regimes respond to this difficult part of their legacy.

Divisions between movements of North and South

The North–South dichotomy is most simply portrayed as the line dividing those of the Earth’s nations that are wealthy from those that live in poverty: the haves versus the have-nots. Other nomenclature refers to the nations of the First World (developed nations) and those of the Third World (developing nations). Three-quarters of the Earth’s population fall into the latter category. Obviously, this categorisation is oversimplified, as it is really the North as well as the Southern elites who are wealthy (ibid.). Still, it remains a useful symbolic division. In many nations of the South, as with parts of Eastern Europe (but, on most occasions, even more so) the links between environmental degradation, illness and poverty are obvious. Indeed, basic human poverty (poor nutrition, inadequate shelter and limited access to education and health services) remains the most fundamental environmental issue.

Although wilderness-oriented movements do exist, they are largely overshadowed by debates about the environment/development nexus (Khan 1994). For example, in South Africa there has been a long history of campaigns to preserve wilderness areas and to construct the large ‘game parks’ and natural reserves such as Kruger National Park and Umfolozi (Carruthers 1995; Player 1997). But wildlife conservation, the creation of game parks, national parks and nature reserves can have a significant impact on the livelihood of local populations, many of whom do not welcome these developments. Given a view of wildlife conservation, of wilderness and a tension between the needs of humans and wild animals the building of parks and reserves has frequently been based on the removal of people from the areas intended for conservation (Player 1997). Although there are examples where this has not happened, removal is frequently the basis for wildlife conservation and the wilderness experience. This can be seen quite clearly in the case of South Africa, accentuated by both colonial and apartheid assumptions about race and land. The struggle to create Kruger as a national park is instructive (Carruthers 1995). Initially the park was formed to provide against game depletion for future hunting, and local populations were incorporated into the expanding park with their grazing, gathering and hunting activities restricted. At a later stage these populations were removed and the success of conservation was directly based on the hardship of dispossession. Subsequent expansion of Kruger was based on the (often multiple) dispossession of local populations. As apartheid was replaced the question of land, dispossession and restitution moved onto the political agenda. Many white conservationists feared that the new government would abandon conservation in favour of desperately needed economic development to support improved standards of living for the newly enfranchised majority. This has not been the case. The first real test of protecting St Lucia under threat from proposals for sand mining, and when the new government reaffirmed its commitment to nature conservation for the benefit of all South Africans (McEachern 1997). Nonetheless, the urge to remove people to make national parks took a while to lessen. For instance, the creation of the Richtersveld National Park on the arid coast of Namaqualand was initially predicated on the dispossession of a group of people who had managed to carve out a meagre existence after relocation as part of the normal politics of apartheid (Fig 1991). After a vigorous local struggle, a new agreement was struck so that the local community could remain, with restricted rights but with some access to the income stream from tourist visits to the area.

Since the end of apartheid there have been efforts to build better relations with the displaced communities living near the parks. Restitution of lost lands with lease back and managerial rights, rather than the Australian model for Uluru, have become more common. Nevertheless, the normal pattern remains and little has been done to lessen the tension between conservation and local well-being in the areas surrounding the park activities.

Obviously, the post-materialist thesis is largely meaningless in the context of environmental activism in the South. There is little about ‘higher values’ (in Western terms) when considering the South’s environmental crisis, and crisis it is. Also, little credence is given to post-industrialist arguments, as most people in the South see the key problem as lack of ownership of their own resources. Chatterjee and Finger comment on this point:
[For] the Third World Network in Malaysia or the Centre for Science and the Environment in India, it is no longer industrial development per se which is considered destructive of the environment. Rather it is the fact that development remains controlled by the North instead of the South. The weakness of this argument, of course, stems from the fact that it mixes together Southern peoples and Southern Elites. (1994: 77)

Also, many parts of the South are not heavily industrialised economies, although this is changing rapidly.

The dominant view of the North is that the poverty of the South has caused and continues to create environmental degradation. This environmental degradation is of grave concern to the North, now advocating global ecology and, as a consequence, seeing itself as inevitably having to share the Earth's essential survival mechanisms with the South. Along these lines, the North portrays the major problems of the South as deforestation, species extinction, global climate change, desertification and overpopulation.

The unwritten assumption here is that the South is the main environmental offender, while the North is a model of environmental controls and reforms. In this view, the North sees itself as bringing its environmental message (including that of sustainable development and good management) to the South, to save the latter from itself. With increased growth and democratisation, 'civil society' will emerge, the North argues, promoting conditions where people will help themselves. It is true that Northern environmental activists, mostly through the vehicles of international NGOs (discussed in the next chapter), are active in the South. Nonetheless, many successful environmental networks in the South are inspired by local activists, many of whom would be construed as 'poor' by Northern standards. They are not degraders or sustainers, but actors.

In the Philippines, for example, a vast and vibrant local environmental movement is fighting environmental degradation head-on across a range of fronts (Broad, 1994: 813). In Africa, grassroots organisations have taken a leading role in the struggle against environmental degradation (Ekins 1992: 114). In India, the movement against the Narmada Dam (ibid., 88; Roy 1999) (which threatened to dispossess entire communities of their traditional lands) and the Chipko movement were mostly driven by local activists. The case of the Chipko movement illustrates how a group of local people, with only the power of their own solidarity, were able to curtail logging in Uttar Pradesh in April 1973 by hugging trees using the Gandhian method of satyagraha (literally 'firmness in the truth', but usually translated in the West as non-violent or passive resistance). This spontaneous movement spread to many parts of the Himalayas over the next five years (Ekins 1992: 143). In South America there are few better examples than that of Chico Mendez and his battle fight for the lifestyle of his community of rubber-tappers against development interests. In Thailand, local people fought the Nam Choar Dam project in the 1980s. Few Western and Japanese investments had been so strongly resisted by the local population since the 1950s. The construction of dams in Thailand had previously led to deforestation, changes in local climatic conditions, declining soil fertility, and degrade water and fishery resources (Hirsch and Lohmann 1989: 445). In Indonesia, the local environmental movement is one of the few dissent voices allowed in an authoritarian regime that has lasted 30 years under General Suharto (MacAndrews 1994: 369–80). In fact, the list is endless: Poor people are most affected by environmental degradation in the Sou and they are the key actors and inspirations of the environmental movement.

Broad writes:

A reader need only flip through any issue of the British journal The Ecologist or the Malaysian Third World Resurgence journal to find numerous case-studies of the poor being involved in protecting the environment – replanting trees, struggling against the enclosure of ancestral lands, fighting for indigenous and community resource management. (1994: 813)

It can be shown time and time again that jeopardising the right of the poor to subsist often leads to environmental activism in the event of most difficult circumstances. Democratisation can create a better climate for environmental action but, as the case of the Ogoni in Nigeria shows, even repressive military regimes face challenges from dedicated and brave poor people seeking to defend their environments.

Although responses to some forms of continued poverty do have a negative impact on local environments, both the degradation and the poverty are generally caused by ancient land-use and ecological histories (such deforestation, desertification), which are rendered damaging when coupled with the more recent (in human terms) exploitation of the South by the North, and the complex interplay between these factors.
Box 3.6

Three stages of development in Southern environmental movements

Stage 1: 1960s

The first development decade in the South brought optimism. Northern-style growth and development were the goals. So much so, that there was little movement opposition within the countries of the South. Movements from outside the South – mainly in the form of large NGOs – occasionally entered the political sphere.

Stage 2: 1970s

During this period, environmental movements emerged in the South. Again, these were dominated by some key NGOs, e.g. the Green Belt Movement in Kenya, the Environment Liaison Centre International, Environment and Development Action in the Third World, and Sahabat Alam Malaysia. Few movement participants opposed the Northern development ideology, but they fought for ‘people’s development’ (another development), not governments’ or multinationals’ development. This type of development shares many similarities with the political ecology movements in the North, particularly Western Europe.

Stage 3: 1980s to present day

During this period, movements split into two categories. After a period of emphasising local and grass-roots development in the 1970s, many networks in these movements began to collaborate with the government and international agencies again, as in the 1960s. Many coalitions of grass-roots group and local NGOs formed umbrella coalitions e.g. Asia Pacific People’s Environmental Network, African NGOs Environmental Network, the Asian NGO Coalition, etc. Many of these powerful coalitions bypass government, on occasions, and negotiate directly with international aid agencies. The other category was the development of environmental protest movements, very similar to the political ecology movements of the North. These networks criticised Northern development schemes. They criticised Northern science and technology, the industrial practices of transnational corporations, national governments, Northern governments, and international aid agencies.

Source: Adapted from Chatterjee and Finger (1994).

So on the political level, these problems are often the result of many ye of imperialism on behalf of the North. The nations of the South were as a treasure trove for Northern traders. Now that these nations are ‘independent’, they have embarked on their own development projects. Over the past 30 years, there have been three distinct periods of development in the environmental movement (see Box 3.6 opposite).

This pursuit of development has been accompanied by environmental degradation for a number of reasons. Damage is partly the result of local industries necessarily producing ‘dirty’ products in a bid to maintain competitiveness in the ‘new global economy’, recently deregulated under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Multinational and transnational companies, however, are the principal environmental offenders in emerging economies. They can produce commodities far more ‘efficiently’, using cheap labour and with the less stringent environmental demands of local legislation. These companies also continue to transport their industrial and toxic wastes to these ‘developing’ nations. Consequently, in ‘newly industrialising economies such as Hong Kong, between 75 and 90 per cent of its factories are illegally dumping liquid wastes into the territory’s waters (Douglas et al. 1994: vii). Between 1.5 and 5.8 million of Hong Kong’s residents have experienced health problems due to air pollution. In Bombay, and other

Plate 4 The Narmada dam, Gujarat, India. The Narmada dam has been the focus of a struggle lasting over a decade and a half, between the pro-development forces championed by the Indian Government and the World Bank, and the new environmental NGO, the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) composed of environmental and human rights activists, scientists, academics, writers and those directly affected. NBA is committed to stopping the numerous dam projects in the Narmada Valley. Authors’ private collection, April 2000
parts of India, the air quality produced by industrial wastes is among the worst in the world. Its antiquated water supply system and lack of a proper sewerage system mean that diseases such as typhoid, malaria, asthma and even bubonic plague are rife in the rapidly expanding suburbs, again reaffirming the nexus between environmental degradation and poverty.

Conclusion

There is no single entity that is the environmental movement. There are only many and varied environmental movements, with many and varied networks within and between them. In each country, some movements reflect the dominant cultural and economic aspirations of their national societies, while others project themselves in opposition to these dominant values. In addition to national and regional distinctions between environmental movements, it is important to understand that since the late 1980s there have also existed global environmental movements that, like the transnational corporations that they either fight or support, no longer have a ‘fixed address’. To complete this account of the character of diverse environmental movements, it is necessary to turn to the most formal and visible components, the non-governmental organisations.

Further reading


