The Greening of Nationalism:
Nationalising Nature in Europe

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Nationalism and ecologism figure prominently in contemporary politics. These trends have been given considerable attention by scholarship. However, less attention has been paid to the ways in which nationalism has scavenged environmental discourses to enhance nationalist claims for autonomy. Similarly, environmentalist discourses may adopt a nationalist flavour to appeal to latent nationalist sentiment. In this article I argue that nationalist movements will mine environmental discourse to enhance the legitimacy of their grievances and to widen their electoral appeal. I conclude that civic nationalists are more likely to find their values and goals compatible with those of contemporary ecologism. The goals and values of ethnic nationalism are able to appropriate naturalistic discourse, but are incompatible with those of Green political actors. I point to contemporary nationalist movements in Scotland and Wales to show how civic nationalist goals can be complemented by environmental ones.

Ecologism has had a considerable impact upon the political discourse of post-industrial, democratic societies. It is manifested at each level of politics: international, national and local. Some have argued that environmental consciousness is a manifestation of a deeper, more fundamental change in the political orientation of a substantial portion of Western electorates whose impact upon politics reflects the presence of a persistent and new way of seeing politics [Inglehart, 1981]. At the same time, however, there has been a renaissance of ethno-territorial movements in the developed West which belies the assumptions of modernisation theorists who foresaw the erosion of vestigial communal attachments in favour of functional attachments of class [Lipset and Rokkan, 1967].

This article seeks to examine the potential connections between these broad doctrines – ecologism and nationalism – at the level of philosophy. I then consider the important connection between nationalism and ‘place’, a connection that can also be viewed as having ecological content, and examine a few European cases in which connections are being made.

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between ecology and nationalism. The question which arises is whether ecologism must be subordinate to the specific agendas of nationalists, or if we are seeing the rise of a new and potentially progressive political hybrid.

Ecologism and Politics

There are a number of important bodies of literature on the relationships between environment and politics. In the field of international relations increasing credence is given to the centrality of environmental sources of conflict \cite{Homer-Dixon, 1999; Percival and Homer-Dixon, 1996}. Ecological conditions and natural resources are seen to shape the nature and intensity of international and sub-national conflict. Experts point to the likelihood of conflict in the Middle East over water resources (between Turkey, Syria, and Iraq over the headwaters of the Euphrates) in the coming century. In the 1970s already high tensions between Israel and its neighbours were raised further by the threats (impotent in retrospect) of OPEC to place a stranglehold on the export of petroleum. The 1970s also witnessed the bizarre spectre of a ‘cod war’ between Britain and Iceland over diminishing fish stocks. At the very least we can conclude that environmental issues can become important in politics even if we do not accord a deterministic role to them.

At the domestic level, in the West at least, there have been important movements which place great priority on the health of ecosystems. Greens are now represented at the local, regional and national levels in a number of European Union member states and in the European parliament itself. Green parties were a response to the apparent democratic sclerosis of politics in Europe in the mid-1970s. New social movements aimed to democratise public life with a stress on grass-roots populism informed by ecological thinking and solidarity with movements struggling for social justice (feminism, gay/lesbian rights, and anti-racist movements). The fact that Europe lay on the nuclear fault-line between the superpowers punctuated the importance of these movements, especially the enormous peace movements of western Europe in the early 1980s. Important manifestations of this green consciousness were, and are, evident in the numerous local initiatives opposing new road construction; opposition to waste sites and weapons testing.

Nationalism and Ecologism Compared

There is no doubt that ecological problems have political consequences and that movements concerned with these problems have had an impact on domestic politics. What might be of more interest to students of politics are
the connections and oppositions present in the relationship between ecologism and nationalism, the most important mobilising doctrine of the twentieth century.

At first glance even the casual observer might protest that ecologism is antithetical to nationalism. Nationalism is often considered romantic, reactionary, exclusionary and anthropocentric. This may well be, but it is not the nature of environmental philosophy that is at issue here so much as the malleable nature of nationalist doctrine. I am in agreement with the view that nationalism is an ideological parasite [Freeden, 1998]. It cannot be said to be an ideology on its own and, therefore, preys upon other ideologies, forming new amalgams suitable for use by political entrepreneurs. But just because nationalism is not an ideology does not mean that it lacks consistent themes wherever it exists. Despite its particularist nature ‘nationalism employs certain concepts such as sovereignty and self-determination, that are durable elements of general political discourse’ [Spencer, 1998: 12]. These elements of discourse do not, of course, imply an ideology but permit a comparison of the durable elements of two families of nationalism with the ideology of ecologism. In the process we can determine the extent to which certain kinds of nationalism are, or are not, compatible with environmental thought.

Ecologism has ideological depth as it proposes a ‘good life’ which can be struggled for after the adoption of certain fundamental perspectives on nature. Dobson [1990: 13] distinguishes between ecologism which ‘presupposes radical changes in our relationship with [the environment], and thus our mode of social and political life’, and environmentalism which seeks to ‘manage’ the externalities brought on by contemporary patterns of production and consumption.

Green political thought can be described as an ideology because, as Ball and Dagger [1999: 5–6] argue, it fulfils four functions: an explanatory one; an evaluative one; an orienting one; and a programmatic one. Green thought identifies the problems of environmental degradation and human alienation from nature. The Western ethos of consumption, materialism and domination over nature form the dominant political discourse in the West [Richardson, 1995: 4]. The consequence of this ‘cult of growth’ is unabated pollution and habitat degradation with no corresponding rise in human fulfilment. The green critique goes further when it advocates a biocentric politics, which takes the earth as a whole into the accounting scheme thereby improving quality of life and reducing inequality and alienation. Richardson [1995: 4] identifies a number of key concepts, which further mark Green political thought [Richardson 1995: 11]. These are social justice, non-violence, decentralisation, gender, racial equality, participatory and human rights.
Having explained the nature of human alienation, green politics goes on to apply evaluative criteria that condemn environmental degradation for profit. Ecologism orients its adherents with a sense of identity and identifies a course of action to remedy ecological problems. On the other hand, Freeden [1998: 750] argues that nationalism is really an embellishment of ‘fuller’ ideologies that offer a ‘reasonably broad, if not comprehensive, range of answers to the political questions that societies generate’. National identities and myths are attached to, or integrated with, ideologies that, in addition to their political content, offer an account of human nature and the nature of social relations.

One well-worn dichotomy contrasts the civic and ethnic variants of nationalism. This does not bring us any closer to describing nationalism as an ideology but is important for the discussion as connections with place and nature may be distilled between the approaches. First of all, we must sketch the distinction between these categories of nationalism. In the case of civic nationalism, Freeden [1998: 755] argues that:

Many theorists of nationalism attach a positive understanding of national identity to the desire to encourage the growth of liberty, whether through the wish to throw off the shackles of tyrannical regimes and to enable a population to rule itself – an aspiration voiced by J.S. Mill and Mazzini – or as a valuable form of patriotism as the love of one’s people. But in many such cases the promotion of nationhood is merely a means to the enhancement of liberty and a range of humanist enlightenment values. Nationalism is a subservient and partial component of broader ideologies.

Freeden’s observations also serve to warn against the error of false nominalism. Whether a nationalism is ‘liberal’ or ‘civic’ should be determined by careful analysis of the nationalism in question, in particular its political discourse, and not simply the nationalist’s self-description. Civic nationalism is a ‘legal-rational’ form of societal union [Breton, 1988: 87]; one based on gesellschaft rather than gemeinschaft attachments. Civic nationalism is not acultural but rather does not prescribe any ‘official culture’. Civic nationalist societies permit exit and entry – one can renounce one’s citizenship or attain it by birth or legal procedure. One cannot exit/enter an ethnic nationalist society. On the other hand, ethnic nationalism is associated with bio-genetic accounts of group genesis and membership. This extended family version, evident in the jus sanguinus conception of citizenship, is familiar to students of nationalism as the ‘nasty’ face of nationalism, as opposed to the jus soli or civic version.

The literature on nationalism continues, for the most part, to deal dichotomously with these two types of nationalism. The civic variety is
taken to be the ‘good’ nationalism and, in principle, free of the atavistic, irrational features associated with the romantic, organic or ethnic variety. As such, civic nationalism is voluntaristic, and its ranks are open to all. The latter is ascriptive, immutable, and closed to outsiders. Nevertheless, considerable latitude for local variation exists within the two models. Ethnic exclusivist nationalisms may focus on different attributes of the nation (say, language at the exclusion of ‘racial’ markers). A civic nationalism is underpinned by a voluntaristic and essential adherence to a set of constitutional principles. National identity, civic or otherwise, may be accompanied by a sense of common purpose and territorial attachment or rootedness.

As Short [1991: 19–20] observes, nation-building in many states was accompanied by ‘conquering the wilderness’. In North America and Australia settler societies were shaped to some extent by the presence of ‘wilderness’. Initially, settlers viewed nature as a kind of enemy and the frontier as a forbidden yet irresistible challenge. In contemporary settler societies, wilderness has served as a symbol of pride – a pride that all citizens can take pleasure in. In Canada, wilderness is an integral feature of the country’s art, literature, and identity [Atwood, 1972].

Unlike ethnic nationalism, however, the connection between wilderness and national identity is neither exclusive nor incompatible with the more utilitarian ‘constitutional patriotism’ which underscores civic nationalism [Habermas, 1992]. The process of settlement is celebrated in North America as part of a process that turned Europeans (among others) into Americans and Canadians. Territory, in these cases, does not exclude but rather provides a benign point of reference for native-born and newcomers alike. Of course, territorial or natural points of reference can also enhance or colour ethnic nationalist attachments. The argument is not that civic nationalism is underpinned by connections to, or conceptions of, nature, but rather that nature can be part of a particular civic nationalism’s distinctiveness.

Sale suggests that nature shapes culture and one might be tempted then to conclude that a connection between bioregionalism and nationalism might be of a distinctly ethnic, rather than civic, variety. As Sale [1991: 156] observes of European separatist movements:

The movements stem from people long associated with the land and connected to regional histories going back many centuries, and the special character of that land has given them those special differences of language and dress and music and folklore that they now try to preserve.

Both the civic and ethnic types may be associated with conceptions of nature and place. Plaid Cymru, Wales’ nationalist party, espouses many
Green ideas but also maintains a very strong civic version of nationalism. Protection of Welsh culture and language does not require the diminution of other languages and cultures. In contrast, ethnic nationalism relies on mythical biologically-informed accounts of national origins of the nation. Herder’s [1995: 54] account is exemplary of this view:

As an individual man can subsist of himself but very imperfectly, a superior maximum of co-operating powers is formed with every society. These powers contend together in wild confusion, till, agreeably to the unfailing laws of Nature, opposing regulations limit each other, and a kind of equilibrium and harmony of movement takes place. Thus nations modify themselves, according to time, place, and their internal character; each bears in itself the standard of its perfection, totally independent of all comparison with that of others.

Fichte, too, emphasised the importance of place in his Addresses to the German Nation. Fichte contrasts the pitiable wretch who is deprived of a fatherland with ‘he to whom a fatherland has been handed down, and in whose soul heaven and earth, visible and invisible meet and mingle, and thus, and only thus, create a true and enduring heaven – such a man fights to the last drop of his blood to hand on the precious possession unimpaired to his prosperity’ [Fichte, 1995: 62–70]. References to biogenetic symbols abound in Fichte’s work – from references to the Fatherland – to the need, at times, for sacrifice of blood to protect the soil for the benefits of the progeny of the nation.

There is a strain in German political thought that rejects modernity and advocates an exaltation of the Volk, itself an idealised peasantry with organic ties to the soil [Biehl, 1993: 133]. At the turn of the century German romanticism revolted against positivism and embraced ‘nature-mysticism’ and racialised nationalism [Biehl, 1993: 131]. In its most outrageous manifestation, Nazism, German nationalism became ‘anti-rationalist’ in that, while utilising the tools of science, it remained anti-modern. So divorced from reason was this neo-pagan, technically-adept society, that it was able to calmly orchestrate unprecedented genocide, itself a programme inspired by myths of racial hygiene. In more recent times the thought of Rudolph Bahro [1986: 41] has expressed a certain sense of frustration with democratic practice, partly reflecting his unwavering and intransigent position on ecology.

German nationalism must not be viewed, at the turn of the century at any rate, as the only genetically-informed nationalism. Imperialism was greatly assisted by the cultural imperialism of Western nations who colonised those considered inferior. Social Darwinists like Herbert Spencer applied biological discourse to the competition between nations and foresaw the
vanquishing of weaker, inferior nations in the face of vigorous expansion by superior ones. In the struggle for survival only the strong would survive. Nature figures strongly in romantic nationalism, both in metaphor with the use of family metaphors (Fatherland, Motherland), in natalist policies encouraging reproduction to protect the homeland for progeny, and, finally, in Darwinist-inspired discourses of struggle and adaptation. What, then, of our other version of nationalism?

**Civic Nationalism and Ecologism**

Civic nationalism is socially constructed and does not assert some ‘natural’ myth of descent but rather asserts membership in the nation by means of social solidarity based on basic values. It also nurtures identity through common institutions, and a shared sense of destiny. As nationalism is also anchored to the modern sense of nation-state, it is based on a territorial conception of identity and collective solidarity. Here too, environment is connected to this sense of nationalism although in a way, at least potentially, compatible with the basic features of contemporary ecologism.

As discussed previously, modern ecologism places a high priority on diversity, both natural and social. Genetic diversity is critical in the non-human natural world both for future evolutionary development as well as for more utilitarian concerns such as agriculture. Diversity is also valued. This is evident in Green valuation of multiculturalism and respect for indigenous peoples and racial/ethnic equality. Other cultures are not only respected but are viewed as tutors providing the means to ameliorate alienation and destructive lifestyles. Petra Kelly argues that, ‘We must learn from those cultures that have maintained their traditions and harmony with nature – Australian Aborigines, American Indians, and others. Tragically, the same forces that threaten the environment threaten many of these societies. We must join them in their struggle to preserve their values and traditions’ [1999: 461].

Threats to cultural diversity mirror those threats to ecosystem diversity and individual species. In fact, the same threats are often implicated in the decline of both human and environmental diversity. An excellent example is evident in the decline of human languages. The legacy of colonisation, conquest, genocide, and environmental exploitation has been the extinction of many human communities with their corresponding linguistic and cultural heritages. Of the approximately 6,000 extant languages only 200 are considered secure [Diamond, 1993]. Of the 20 native languages of Alaska, 18 are moribund as new generations adopt both English and Western lifestyles. Even relatively strong native languages like Navajo (100,000 speakers) are vulnerable as the young increasingly become
English monoglots. The process of linguistic homogenisation is assisted by the dominance of capitalist modes of production, which draw communities from native (often peripheral) territories for economic survival. Social dislocation disrupts the intricate, but fragile, social bonds that maintain cultural diversity leading to a decrease of this diversity. Cultural diversity is to be valued and protected as unique expressions of human identity and knowledge. There is also the crucial harm that is done to those who are deprived of their culture in favour of assimilation, and the subsequent loss to the human race of unique forms of expression and perspective.

The European Context

A connection between Green thought and civic nationalism is evident in the priority both doctrines place upon diversity. The desire to protect and nurture indigenous languages in Catalonia or Wales is not a reactionary statement of innate superiority, but rather an attempt to preserve a portion of the human fabric and a unique lens of perception. Those who seek to protect and encourage the learning of Welsh are determined not to supplant English, but to preserve Welsh. These efforts have been successful in the Welsh case, not because English speakers were oppressed in some manner, but because resources were harnessed to teach the young to speak Welsh.

The Welsh case is particularly instructive in a discussion of the connections between Green thought and civic nationalism. Absorbed by conquest in 1536, Wales has retained its cultural distinctiveness and has witnessed a net increase in the number Welsh speakers since the Second World War. Plaid Cymru’s occasional electoral successes have served to alert the British government to the vulnerable status of Welsh and, since the early 1980s successive governments have provided additional funding for language instruction, and established, in 1981, a television channel (Sianel Pedwar Cymru) which broadcasts Welsh-language programming [Sharpe, 1985: 8].

The concern with diversity is one commonality which might explain the especially close ties which developed between the Welsh Green Party and Plaid Cymru in the early 1990s. Literature from the 1994 European Elections committed Plaid Cymru to closer working relations with European Green parties.3 In Wales, an electoral pact with the Green Party (1989–92) led to the election of Cynog Dafis (Green/Plaid Cymru) in the constituency of Ceredigion and Pembroke North (now Ceredigion).6 This successful alliance was preceded, in the mid-1980s, by attempts by Plaid Cymru to create linkages with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, feminist organisations, and the Green Party [Lynch, 1995: 202]. To be sure, these efforts were a response to competitive pressures from the dominant
Labour Party long held to be the party of the New Left. *Plaid Cymru* wanted to expand its influence beyond cultural issues and to adopt the discourse of new-Left politics in the areas of decentralisation, local democracy, sustainable development, and peace.

*Plaid Cymru* was no newcomer to environmental issues but these came to the forefront with the European elections of 1989. In the 1989 European Elections in Wales the Greens polled a respectable 11.3 per cent compared with *Plaid Cymru*’s 12.3 per cent. The Greens’ vote was much more evenly distributed across Wales unlike PC’s, whose vote was concentrated in the North Wales (Welsh Wales) constituency [Lynch, 1995: 204]. Electoral cooperation between PC and the Greens was initiated by those who felt that the parties had much in common including: support for Welsh independence, desire for decentralisation and autonomy, as well as environmental concerns. In October 1989 the alliance began with negotiations over strategic withdrawals from constituencies thought winnable by one party or the other. The 1989 *Plaid Cymru* conference reversed the party’s commitment to economic growth in favour of sustainable development [Lynch, 1995: 206]. In 1992 this alliance paid off with the election of Cynog Dafis in Ceredigion and Pembroke North. In a 1994 interview Dafis compared the perspectives of Green and *Plaid Cymru* philosophy:

Yes, I think there is [a natural compatibility]. They come from distinct starting points. One, from the position of environmental sustainability and concerned with behaviour, consumption and production and so on. The recognition that we live within limits. *Plaid Cymru* comes from the need for the valuation of cultural distinctiveness and for political structures in order to make possible the development of Welsh nationhood. What they have in common is their concern with diversity, in one case biological, and in the other, cultural. Also, both are decentralist in their thrust. *Plaid Cymru*, over a long period of time, has endorsed policies on local participation. Combined these ideas provide potent energy.

Dafis suggested that the two parties shared two common themes: (1) sustainability, of both cultural and genetic diversity is important, and (2) decentralisation alongside complementary trans-national decision-making. The primary aims of *Plaid Cymru*, to ‘free themselves of Anglo-centricity’ (and thus preserve cultural diversity) and to decentralise politics via subsidiarity are not very different from views espoused by Western Green parties.

The Scottish National Party (SNP) provides another interesting case of a nationalist party whose discourse and policy is very much concerned with
the environment. The SNP has never entered into a strategic alliance with the Scottish Greens although both parties share a commitment to Scottish independence. The SNP is a committed civic-nationalist party which advocates the independence of Scotland within the institutional framework of the European Union (EU). The party endorses a bill of rights; a written constitution, racial equality, unilateral disarmament, and citizenship based on residency or birth in Scotland. Sometimes, civic nationalist movements like the SNP are viewed as inherently weaker than ethnic nationalist parties because they do not exalt the emotive appeal to blood or Volk. The SNP is even less able than other civic nationalist parties to exploit intrinsically Scottish traits as Gaelic is the language of only a tiny minority.

This is not to argue that there have never been elements of racialist nationalism in Scotland. The nineteenth century witnessed the rise of peculiar ‘teutonist’ ethnologies which viewed the Highlands and their inhabitants as backward, inferior Celts in contrast to the ‘Germanic’ lowlanders with their corresponding industriousness and civility [Kidd, 1995: 45–68]. The twentieth century, however, has witnessed the explicitly civic nationalism characterised by the SNP.

Environmental imagery and issues pervade the SNP’s discourse. The United Kingdom is viewed as a negligent landlord depositing the dangerous by-products of British folly in the forms of nuclear weapons (Trident) and nuclear waste. Scotland is relatively unspoiled relative to the rest of the UK, at least partly because of its lower population density. Scotland is relatively ‘underpolluted’ compared with the rest of the UK. Figures for nitrous oxide, sulphur dioxide and carbon dioxide emissions are much lower [Slesser and Crane, 1995]. The relative abundance of natural places makes the countryside ‘a focus of popular culture’ [Prentice and Guerin, 1998: 180]. This focus has been evident in the art and literature of the Romantic era, particularly in the work of Sir Walter Scott [Prentice and Guerin, 1998: 181].

It would be surprising if no sense of place or nature did emerge in the discourse of the SNP. Indeed, environment does inform the civic nationalism of the SNP in some interesting ways. This is evident in SNP literature on nuclear energy, nuclear waste sites, oil self-sufficiency, and the siting of Trident tactical missiles. A brief analysis of these areas will demonstrate the degree to which the SNP’s civic nationalism is interlinked with Green thinking.

The SNP is firmly committed to a Scotland free of nuclear waste and weapons. An independent Scotland would withdraw from the UK’s Trident missile program and order all nuclear weapons off ‘our soil’ [SNP, 1992a: 9]. Further, the Polaris submarine bases in Scotland would be shut down. So opposed to nuclear weaponry is the party that it would ‘negotiate to
disengage from the NATO Command structure’ [SNP, 1992a: 9]. Scotland’s exit from the Trident programme would, according to the SNP, free up Scotland’s contribution of £1.5 billion which could then be redirected toward ‘health, housing, education, and jobs’ [SNP, 1992a: 9]. The SNP has been especially active in opposing the treatment/storage of foreign and UK nuclear waste at Dounreay. The Party has described the UK government’s willingness to import such material as ‘lunacy of the first order’ [SNP, 1992a: 10].13 The party would also set up an Environmental Protection Agency responsible to Parliament and independent of the executive.

The SNP has taken successive British governments to task over environmental issues throughout the 1990s. The party has vociferously opposed the privatisation of water and sewage services. In 1989 the Save Scotland’s Water campaign (in co-operation with Friends of the Earth, Scotland) warned the Scottish electorate of the dangers of increasing water pollution and of the dangers of privatisation [SNP, 1992b: 6]. By 1992 the Scottish Office had been instructed to consider various private sector initiatives to improve water and sewage services.14 The fear was that, in the event of privatisation, water supplies might be cut to the poorest and result in a subsequent rise in rates of dysentery and hepatitis, as had occurred in Sandwell, England in 1993 [SNP, 1993]. Opposition on the part of the SNP centred on a discourse of democratic principle. Scotland had not provided a mandate to the Major government (only 25.7 per cent of voters voted for the Conservatives). The structure of water services was wrapped up with a broader political agenda. The party’s research bulletin argued that ‘Social, economic and environmental issues such as water privatisation cannot be divorced from the wider issue of how Scotland is governed’ [SNP, 1992b: 7]. It seemed that this position resonated with that of the Scottish electorate as whole who opposed privatisation (87 per cent).15

The Dounreay waste storage dump is also the site of a former nuclear reactor (shut down in the early 1990s). Built near the town of Caithness, in Scotland’s far North, the reactor has an unenviable safety record. The UK Energy Authority selected the site in 1952 for its remote location. By 1958 the plant was running and employed 2,400 experts (mainly from England) and all (as reported in *The Scotsman*, 15 Oct. 1996) bound by the Official Secrets Act. The plant experienced leaks and overheating (1962), coolant leak (1967), fire (1970), a small explosion (1977) and there remains a 214-foot deep ‘waste shaft’, the content of which is uncertain due to poor record-keeping [SNP, 1996: 16]. While the plant has since been shut down it remains a concern as it is to be used for nuclear waste storage. The SNP and Friends of the Earth campaigned against the planned import of American waste in 1995, and continue to oppose the import of waste from abroad.
In both of the above cases the SNP opposed environmental disruption imposed from outside. Scotland is a part of the UK but in a social and historic sense it remains a different country. The SNP has drawn analogies between the Thatcherite practice of experimenting with Scotland; the Poll Tax was first introduced here. Similarly, nuclear waste facilities are portrayed as treating Scotland as a dumping ground. The stationing of Polaris submarines and Trident missiles, as well as the Royal Air Force’s use of Northern Scotland, is further evidence of the exploitation of Scotland. There is a real sense of proprietary indignation on the part of the SNP: How dare you use ‘our’ land for these dangerous purposes? The implication is further advanced by the argument that the Tory government is without a mandate in Scotland and therefore any move to dump waste or privatise a basic service is illegitimate. Scotland is imagined as a person whose pristine qualities are sullied by the will of a tyrannical majority who, ruling from Westminster, see fit to sully the essence of Scottish character. In this sense the environment is inextricably wrapped up with nationalism, the sense of which is heightened among Scots by the impunity which with UK governments may act, and the sense of impotence which results. As one SNP news release (12 January 1995) laments:

Examples of the bad government, which Scotland has endured at Tory hands, include the imposition of the Poll Tax, the gerrymandering of Scottish local government and the removal of Scotland’s water from democratic control. All of these policies have been forced on the Scottish people, against our will, by a government which we did not elect.

**Ecologism and Nationalism Reconsidered**

I have attempted to show how nationalism, especially civic nationalism, is related to environmental issues in Scotland and Wales. Now I want to broaden the analysis to consider the degree to which nationalism and ecologism are compatible. The first instinct is, sensibly, to reject any coherent marriage of green philosophy with any political programme based on nationalist priorities. Nationalism conjures up images of authoritarianism, militarism and self-worship. The narcissism of nationalism is necessarily anthropocentric and utilitarian as regards the natural world. This extreme form of nationalism may treasure a place (as the Serbs treasure Kosovo) but see the rest of the world as potential resources. Based on this exaggerated account, how could Green ideas be compatible with nationalism?

The civic version of nationalism shares a number of features in common with ecologism. An obvious candidate is the desire for more democratic and
decentralised forms of governance. Both the Scottish and Welsh nationalist parties are clearly civic in their character. Plaid Cymru’s concern with cultural and language issues does not at all undermine its commitment to a civic form of citizenship. These parties strive for increased areas of jurisdiction on grounds of both effectiveness (better policy-making) and democratic legitimacy. Since the Second World War most European states have attempted to accommodate these aspirations with various measures involving the empowerment of regional levels of government (varying in degree of power of course). Britain is a relative late comer to this process. Scotland elected its first parliament in three centuries on 6 May 1999. Northern Ireland and Wales have also been permitted a degree of sub-national decision-making. On the continent devolution has been going on for some time. Both Spain and Belgium have had a longer experience with devolutionary measures.

The Green critique of the soul-less technocratic state, which, in part, has deprived humans of meaning and community, resonates somewhat here. Goodin \[1992: 147\] argues that the green emphasis on decentralisation makes the ideology truly distinctive. Smaller political communities are valued for both practical and idealistic reasons as they operate on a ‘human scale’ \[Sale, 1980\]. Smaller states might be expected to be better stewards of the land when their states are so small that the effects of environmental irresponsibility are so readily and quickly apparent. In addition, there is an old political maxim, stemming from classical Greece, which suggests that smaller communities are preferable to large ones. The modern critique of mass, \textit{anomie}-producing society might be partly addressed by the civic-nationalist aim of devolution and, in the Scottish case, national independence.

Bioregionalism, the wedding of place, consciousness, and political organisation, might be viewed as compatible with the aspirations of civic nationalisms of Western Europe.\textsuperscript{16} Sale has laid out four principles of bioregionalism: liberating the self via humane and reciprocal solidaristic community, \textit{self-reliance}, \textit{knowing the land} and \textit{learning the lore of the land} and passing it on intergenerationally (cited in Pepper \[1993: 186\]). The idea of adopting an appropriate land ethic toward a place and encouraging the development of community and democracy is also compatible with the doctrine of subsidiarity as espoused in the treaties of the European Union. Subsidiarity demands that decision-making take place at the lowest possible level. This permits the widening of democratic opportunity, the transparency of policy-making, and the efficacy of citizens. Furthermore, the structures and resources of the European Union permit the means to address vexing trans-national environmental problems.

Both the Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru advocate membership in the European Union informed by the principle of subsidiarity. From a
Green perspective, Europe is cause for both problems and promise. Europe will raise environmental standards, as states reluctant to introduce expensive protectionist measures are required to do so within a certain time frame after entry. Member states in southern Europe (as well as future members in Eastern Europe) will see standards for environmental protection rise. The Green emphasis on internationalism and the desire among minority nations in Europe to maintain membership in the EU seem reasonably compatible.

Strange Bedfellows?

It might be objected that the similarities suggested between civic nationalism and ecologism are superficial and unimportant. This is a serious argument and must be considered more carefully. There are some fundamental reasons to conclude that these doctrines, ‘green’ and civic-nationalist, are mutually incompatible.

The first and obvious disjuncture lies in the essential anthropocentric nature of any nationalism. Even the benign civic variety exalts human interests and concerns. Even an internationalist, humane nationalism like that of the SNP is committed to human needs and nature seems to be treated in a utilitarian manner. This is certainly preferable to mysticism and organic mythology connecting Volk and soil but remains at odds with a central plank of Green thought: that non-human nature has interests which must also be borne in mind alongside human interests. The most obvious source of conflict stems from the discourse of growth.

In liberal democracies competitive party competition dictates the need to promise improvements in the material wealth via promises of more jobs, lower taxes, and decreased regulation. Green parties, on the other hand, advocate a valuation of spiritual and non-material benefits, which come from a slower pace of life, an emphasis on meeting basic needs and reducing the harmful impact of the growth-oriented society. In the case of Scotland, the SNP promises to fund a fairly generous welfare state with the revenues flowing from the North Sea oil fields. Oil is one of those ‘hard energy paths’ which tends to be capital-intensive, polluting, and unsustainable. Oil is also becoming increasingly scarce and expensive to produce. Whatever the economic implications of oil dependency in an independent Scottish state, there is a more compelling and limiting condition to which all states relying on non-renewable resource revenues must attend. Recent predictions of the sustainability of oil resources suggest that radical change in energy use will be forced upon the planet before too long. Geologist Craig Bond Hatfield has predicted conservatively that oil reserves will be completely depleted by 2057 (1997: 121). In the ten-year
period between 1985 and 1995, world oil consumption increased from 59.7 million barrels per day to 69 million barrels per day. Increasing demand from newly-industrialising economies and declines in Russian and US fields have been met by increases in production in the Gulf states and slight increases in North Sea and Latin American oil production. The exhaustion of the resource may even occur sooner if consumption rates continue to climb and, if, as Hatfield suspects, OPEC nations exaggerate reserves in order to boost permitted production \cite{Campbell and Laherrère, 1998: 79}.

Geologists Colin Campbell and Jean Laherrière argue that Hatfield’s estimates are, in fact, conservative. Their analysis indicates that global oil reserves will decline by 2010 \cite{1998: 79}. Eighty per cent of oil-fields currently exploited were found before 1973. The annual average oil discovered in the 1990s is only one-third of the annual total drained from fields. More money spent on oil discovery will be in vain: ‘there is only so much crude oil in the world, and the industry has found about 90 per cent of it’ \cite{1998: 81}. These projections are based upon a technique developed by Shell geologist M. King Hubbert which accurately predicted the production peak (1970) which occurred in the US ‘lower 48’. The peak of North Sea production in Norwegian and Scottish/British waters will occur in 2000–01. Oil extraction will decline after this, until exhaustion, by 2015.

There is a serious tension between the SNP’s environmental credentials and their need to deliver material prosperity to the Scottish public. The temptation to extract as much oil as possible to consolidate and develop a new state will place a heavy burden on the marine environment with increased traffic from tankers, the potential for accidents and the likelihood of subsidised fuel in Scotland itself, which would lead to higher consumption rates and hence more pollution. As the oil resource runs down, alternative forms of energy will need to be developed, especially if the SNP remains committed to its anti-nuclear power stance.

Another potential area of tension between green ideals and nationalism lies in the practice of encouraging birth rate to increase the nation’s population (and, by implication, subordinating women’s interests to that of the state).\footnote{21} Population control is fairly controversial for ecologists, as it often seems directed more zealously towards third world populations than Western ones. We also know that the average Canadian produces many times the amount of negative environmental externalities than the average resident of the developing world. This is especially true in the case of energy consumption. Nationalists seeking to use fiscal incentives for population growth necessarily contribute to, rather than diminish, their nation’s impact on the global environment.
Conclusions

For many, the articulation between Green bio-centrism and nationalism is a pointless exercise. This view arises from the rigid compartmentalisation of modes of political thought, which imply that the relationship between these modes is like mathematics; rule bound set theory precluding certain combinations. This is obviously not the case. Nature and environmental discourses are often linked, regrettably, to irrational reactionary political agendas. Political concepts are blunt instruments. Decentralisation does not necessarily require an adoption of the implicit principles of the Catholic doctrine of subsidiarity. Nor does a commitment to the preservation of the environment imply a level of progressive virtue. Varying degrees of enviropatriotism could serve as a rationalisation for the exclusion of ‘outsiders’, ostensibly to limit population pressures in a given territory.

There are tensions within particular political programmes, which may well make them incompatible with stated goals. The SNP’s civic nationalism shares the goal of independence with the Scottish Green Party but the parties differ considerably on the nature of the economy. The SNP is committed to the extraction of fossil fuels to acquire the rents necessary for building a generous welfare state. There is a necessary cost to every policy and this focus will extract an environmental cost. The SNP, and arguably, Plaid Cymru too, are committed to growth (sustainable development in the Welsh case), putting them at odds with green principles.

On European integration and subsidiarity, there may also be tensions between Scottish and Welsh nationalism and Green thought. European integration carries the promise of security, access to markets and extended influence via the institutions of the Union for small states. However, the EU may be viewed as a compromise to the stringent ecologism of Scandinavian Europe. The levelling of standards is no cause for celebration among the Greens of some member states. Furthermore, the institutions of the EU are often critiqued for their ‘democratic deficit’. Membership in the EU will not necessarily tip the balance in favour of those demanding a less centralised, more democratic and more accountable European Parliament (EP). Despite reforms in the late 1970s and mid-1980s, the European Parliament has been widely criticised [Boyce, 1993; Wallace and Smith, 1995] as an ineffective talking shop, impotent against the agenda of the Council of Ministers and the European Commission. As the EU remains preoccupied with both eastern enlargement and the single currency, it may be some time before serious reforms to the practice of governance are entertained. Other critics have also pointed out the historical continuity of the EU with previous European empires [Galtung, 1994]. In essence, the new Europe is a new configuration of the old colonial empires. Clearly, this is out of step with Green decentralisation.
Despite the contradictions noted above, I would expect to see continued experimentation with electoral alliances between regionalist-nationalist parties and Greens in Europe. This may mean that nationalist parties will employ ecological issues to accentuate the disjuncture between ‘alien’ rule and the nationalist agenda. On the other hand, a contagion from the ‘nats’ might encourage exclusivist policies among Greens. Indeed, we must be careful not to engage in false nominalism. Green parties can be nationalist just as nationalists can be green. Niki Kortyvylevylessy, of the British Green Party, expressed puzzlement at the nationalist flavour of East European Green parties she was familiar with.23

Podoba [1998: 131] points out that Slovakia’s Greens have been divided since 1990 between pro-federalists (anti-nationalist) and nationalists. In October 1990, all Green deputies but one supported language legislation restricting the rights of Slovakia’s Hungarian minority. Green deputies also were represented at the meetings of the radical nationalist organisation, Matica slovenska. Internal division within the Green Party led first to a split in 1991 and subsequent disbanding of the party in 1992.

In Spain, the Catalan Generalitat (government) of Jordi Pujol has not adopted a Green discourse [Marshall, 1996]. One reason for this is that Spain has, since 1983, placed a moratorium on the construction of nuclear power plants, depriving nationalists of a ready symbol of Madrid’s insensitivity. Another reason is that Catalan cultural issues have been the primary focus of nationalist politics in Catalonia with Green politics muted and localised. In Spain generally, one observer suggests, the Greens would be better off seeking alliances with ‘explicitly regionalist parties’ [Holliday, 1997: 174].

Change and insecurity encourage political experimentation. With globalisation, environmental destruction and economic change new ideological partnership will certainly emerge. As the frozen cleavages thawed so too have ideological divisions. Despite the protests of purists ideologies will be pillaged and cannibalised. That this mutual process has occurred between regionalists/nationalists and greens is perhaps not so surprising. As environmental resources are viewed more and more as part of national security we should see greater attention to the nation’s ecology rather than the earth’s. This is a pessimistic viewpoint, perhaps unnecessarily so.

In the two primary cases examined here, Scotland and Wales, nationalism’s malleability is evident, making these ideological amalgams well situated to taking on elements of Green thought. This is particularly evident in Wales where experimental co-operation with the Green party has underscored Plaid Cymru’s commitment to certain key elements of Green politics, especially decentralisation, democratic reform/renewal, a
disavowal of the sacrosanct concept of Westphalian sovereignty in favour of
international Cupertino/integration, and respect for diversity. In Scotland,
contradictions between the discourse of nationalists and environmentalists
are apparent in a number of policy areas especially energy.

Whether nationalist movements in the west generally will become
genuinely Green or merely use environmental problems as a basis to
advance their political aims remains to be seen. The call to ‘think globally
and act locally’ seems in tune with green nationalism. Perhaps people will
be more attentive to environmental problems that are salient rather than
abstract. This does not require an ethnic component, since residency would
be the basis on which local assertiveness on environmental matters would
be based.

A sense of ownership, of responsibility to future residents and ancestors,
and enlightened self-interest might channel civic identity and territorial
attachment to environmental ends. This possibility is different from the
doomsday scenarios presented in areas where nations struggle for control of
resources like water, and where such conflicts may yet degenerate into
outright war. An environmentally sensitive civic nationalism might be the
ideological basis for protection of resources rather than the hoarding of
them. In this respect, and under conditions such as those present in
Scotland, and especially Wales, green (civic) nationalism may represent a
new and potentially helpful ally in the ongoing struggle to protect the earth.

NOTES
1. Anthropocentrism is not a fatal flaw for any ideology as it can be defined not as human
chauvinism and domination – excluding all other parts of nature – but rather as weak
anthropocentrism, viewing humans and their interests as legitimate parts of nature [Dobson,
2000: 56].
2. In Canada, much national pride is sustained by the maintenance of a comprehensive, single-
payer, universal health care system that is standardised across the federation. This system is
one of the gesellschaft attachments, which unite Canadians in a common project
notwithstanding Canada’s cultural diversity.
3. Societies typically described as civic nationalist in character have often abused the rights of
minorities. In the process of statebuilding, successive French governments have tended to
encourage the assimilation of minority groups in the territory of France (Basques,
Corsicans). Jacobin anti-pluralism had the effect of reducing ethnic diversity and reducing
minority language use [Rogers, 1996: 553]. The USA, another civic nationalist society, has
a lengthy history of assimilation – if not genocide – of indigenous peoples in its territory.
These examples show that civic nation may be open to all but not necessarily respectful or
encouraging of diversity. These examples in no way undermine the importance of a culturally
sensitive civic nationalist model, which is open but also respectful of difference. Neither are
civic nationalist movements culture-free, a civic movement may well be civic because it
respects difference (via language policy, etc.).
eradicated from history’.
also emphasises Plaid Cymru’s commitment to a sustainable economy.
6. Dafis was re-elected in 1997 for the new constituency of Ceredigion in Wales. He is Plaid Cymru’s spokesperson on Environment, Education and Employment, Energy and International Development.

7. Wales is divided into five European constituencies. North Wales is referred to as Welsh Wales as it is more rural isolated and contains the highest proportion of Welsh speakers in the country.


9. The SNP advocated a variety of ‘Green’ policy positions prior to the emergence of the British/Scottish Green parties. To this day there is a consistent degree of popular support for the parties’ unilateral disarmament position and anti-nuclear power position. Plaid Cymru became involved with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in 1957 [Butt-Phillip, 1975: 82]. For an examination of the relationship between post-materialism and support for nationalist parties in Wales and Scotland, see Studlar and McAllister [1988].


11. The population density of Scotland is 66 people per square mile compared with 237 in Britain as a whole. The figure is deceptive however since the population is clustered in the central belt between Glasgow and Edinburgh. The population density in the Highlands is eight persons per square mile while the population density of Glasgow is 3,477 people per square mile [Scottish Office, 1993]. Scotland is relatively blessed in terms of natural areas compared with much of Western Europe.

12. We should bear in mind that superficially ‘wild’ Scottish ecological history tells us that the ‘wilderness’ bears more resemblance to a large hunting park than a genuine wilderness. Highland Scotland was forcibly depopulated after the rebellion of Bonnie Prince Charlie in 1745. These refugees were forcibly repatriated to North America and elsewhere. Contemporary land use reflects the early pastimes of the aristocracy: hunting, fishing, hiking, etc. For a fascinating account of the representations of Scotland, especially by the Scottish Tourist Board, see McCrone, Morris and Kiely [1995].

13. Both the Conservative and Labour Parties support treatment at Dounreay.


16. One definition of bioregionalism describes it as a situation where ‘People would cultivate love for a particular region and structure their style of life so as to live gently within that place’. See Nash [1989: 148].

17. The acquis communautaire, ‘the community patrimony’, requires conformity to the plethora of rules and regulations prescribed under European law (as well as decisions of the European Court of Justice) as a condition of membership. As intrusive as this may seem, for many, this sacrifice is a reasonable price for the benefits of membership.

18. I must point out that the Greens of Scandinavia have opposed membership on the grounds that their environmental standards would decrease with membership. High environmental standards in Scandinavia might be partly explained by the important ecological element in Scandinavian identity.

19. By September 1972, the party had adopted two slogans: ‘It’s Scotland’s Oil’ and ‘Rich Scots or Poor Britons’. The party could now point to an issue of vital importance to Scotland and claim to be the legitimate defender of the interests of the nation. As Levy argues, the SNP’s position changed the politics of oil. Whereas the Conservative and Labour parties fought over the private/public ownership dimension, the SNP claimed the nationalist one. The emphasis upon Scottish sovereignty distinguishes the SNP position from that of the mainstream parties. The Conservatives viewed oil as a magnet for investment, Labour viewed it as a vehicle for enhancement of the welfare state, while the SNP viewed oil as the currency with which the prize, statehood, could be purchased. See Levy [1990].

20. Since 1985 petroleum use has grown by 30 per cent in Latin America, 40 per cent in Africa and 50 per cent in Asia, see Hatfield [1997: 121].

21. Three different examples of women’s bodily autonomy compromised in the interest of political interests occur to me here. Think of the elites who take comfort in the demographic
‘revenge of the cradle’ in Israel’s occupied territories manifested in the intifadah. The Soviet Union awarded medals to women who bore ten children or more in the late 1930s. More recently, Lucien Bouchard of the Parti Québécois was chastised for suggesting in a speech that ‘we’ (Québécois) do not produce enough children. More benignly, Canada pays parents a ‘baby bonus’ for each child under 18. Such policies could be construed as compromising women’s autonomy and, hence, take a backseat to the interest of the nation. More recently this issue has been raised in depopulated Scotland. The Scottish Office sees no possibility of emulating a recent Icelandic policy that would provide generous benefits in the hope of reversing the low birth rate in that country. Such benefits, combined, offset total tax payments. This kind of policy would be ultra vires for the Scottish Assembly as Westminster controls benefit expenditure. However, an independent Scottish state could introduce policy designed to raise the birthright (‘Chill Out and Have More Children’, Scotland on Sunday, 22 Feb. 1998).

The discourse of France’s National Front is replete with references to women’s role in preserving the nation. Women are ‘essential’ and ‘noble’. Their primary role is that of reproduction, see Simmons [1996: 246].

There is no clear link between population growth and environmental degradation. However, nationalists in Western states have a disproportionate impact upon the earth by necessity because of high consumption rates. In any event, pro-natalist policies are probably more at home among ethnic nationalists than civic nationalists. Neither Plaid Cymru nor the Scottish National Party support such policies.

22. This is particularly true in Germany among the far-right that employ a naturist spirituality in their writings. The Republikaner, founded by ex-SS member Franz Schönhuber, have called for ‘the preservation of the existence of the German Volk, its health and its ecological living-space as a priority for internal policy’. They are also very much in favour of family planning to prevent a population explosion in the Third World and vehemently opposed to abortion for German women. See Biehl [1993: 140].


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