

[Anti-environmentalism in critical social science and new conservation](#)

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INTRODUCTION: DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF ENVIRONMENTALISM

Environmentalism and environmental activism have many different faces. This varies depending on the specific national or international context in which the group or individuals are defined, and also by whether it is individuals within, or inspired by, the movement doing the defining, or if it those outside it. Sometimes environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS), ‘environmental organizations’, ‘activists’, ‘conservationists’ and grass-roots protest movements are lumped together with environmental government agencies or ministries concerned with regulating, managing or profiting from natural resources. Indeed, under the label of ‘environmentalists’, we can speak of many different organizations, movements, institutions, groups and individuals inspired – for one reason or other – to protect the environment and the nature of their region. One of the unifying features of these motivationally, ethically and operationally diverse groups is a concern to retain nonhuman life, be it on farmland or in forests, rivers, seascapes or other natural areas.

In the way that a generalized ‘environmentalism’ exists, we can also consider the opposite – a generalized ‘anti-environmentalism’. This chapter will outline a number of areas in which anti-environmentalism represents an important challenge for environmental protection. ‘Environmental protection’ can refer to a simple act of a person recycling paper, but it can also refer to the much larger efforts to mitigate climate change, and even to the direct goals of biological conservation – addressing biodiversity loss by conserving natural areas and protecting threatened species. Conversely, anti-environmentalism is a very broad spectrum that runs from a municipal failure to facilitate paper recycling, say, to the murder of environmental activists protesting against damaging activities such as logging or poaching.

Social psychologist Paul Stern (2000) has made a distinction between behaviors that directly cause environmental change, such as the clear-cutting of forests, and behaviors that have an indirect impact on the environment. An example of the latter is the investment of pension funds in fossil fuels; this and other indirect behaviors shape the context in which choices are made that directly cause environmental change (Stern, 2000, p. 408). Following Stern’s classification of direct and indirect environmental impact, we can also apply such a distinction to anti-environmentalism, of which there are passive or indirect effects on environmentalism, as well as direct ones, such as violent action. We will focus mostly on the indirect anti-environmentalism that subtly manipulates ethical discourse to position anthropocentrism as normative while ignoring ecocentric positions. This, we shall argue, has potentially devastating consequences in contexts where environmental action is needed the most. Here, we shall consider in detail the case of biological conservation at a time of major extinction crisis (e.g. IPBES, 2019). We will also investigate the causes of anti-environmentalism. First, we consider a number of examples of direct violent anti-environmentalism.

<a> DIRECT ANTI-ENVIRONMENTALISM

Between the 1990s and the present, many hundreds of environmental activists have been murdered in South and Central America (Spanne, 2016; Watts and Vidal, 2017; Watts, 2018), Asia (Global Witness, 2013; Blet, 2018), Africa (Nixon, 1996; Burke, 2018) and elsewhere (Holmes, 2016). In Africa, for example, many environmental activists have been killed for protesting against the oil industry (Nixon, 1996) or defending wildlife against poachers in national parks (Burke, 2018).

In 2018, 20 environmental and land rights activists were killed in Guatemala alone (Vidal, 2018), part of a global total of at least 83 environmental defenders killed in the first 10

months of the year (The Guardian, 2018). As environmental protests have erupted around the globe, the killing continues. There is evidence that such murders are increasing in frequency: the rate of murders may be as high as four activists each week (The Guardian, 2018). Behind each murder is a tragic personal story. For instance, Jairo Mora Sandoval, a Costa Rican conservationist, was murdered on the same beach where he tried to protect turtles, his hands tied behind his back while he sustained grave injuries to his head (Fendt, 2015). Elsewhere in Central America, Berta Cáceres Flores and other environmentalists were killed in Honduras in 2016 (Spanne, 2016), while Isidro Baldenegro López, an Indigenous opponent of illegal logging, and other protestors were killed in Mexico in 2017 (Watts and Vidal, 2017).

In Western Europe, many climate change and biodiversity-related strikes have taken place in the last few years. In Europe, “governing with the greens was never easy”, as one article in *The Economist* (2014, p. 27) laments, reflecting on the death of French environmental activist Remi Fraisse, who was killed while protesting the building of a dam that threatened biodiversity. Since October 2018, a group called Extinction Rebellion has blocked the streets of London and taken action in other areas to draw attention to the contribution to climate change and extinction of governments, through their consistent inability to act, and citizens, through private actions such as driving cars. The group members blocking the roads received threats by car owners and some were arrested (Laville, 2018; BBC, 2019). The protests in London received significant press coverage, but elsewhere in Europe, especially in the east, activism is often less well reported on. Even so, some news does appear; for example, in 2018, it emerged that Andrei Rudomakha, a Russian environmentalist and coordinator of the Environmental Watch on North Caucasus, had been severely beaten (The Moscow Times, 2018). Another recent example of violence comes from when peaceful protests to protect trees in a park in Istanbul, Turkey, escalated to police violence. This was reported to be another example of an old problem: “the violence against environmental protesters began decades ago” (Aksogan, 2013). Also in Turkey, in 2017, Aysin and Ali Büyüknöhuçü, who were beekeepers and environmental defenders, were murdered, and at the time of writing, no convictions have been made from what have been described as ‘sham’ trials (Watts, 2018).

In Asia, environmental activism – ranging from the opposition of logging and mining, through protests calling political attention to climate change, to actions to protect threatened species – has recently intensified. In Hanoi, Vietnam, protestors challenged the cutting down of centuries-old trees (The Economist, 2015). In 2017, a Vietnamese environmental activist Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh was sentenced to 10 years in prison for “distributing propaganda against the state” (Nguen and Datzberger, 2018). In China, Lei Yang, who worked for the Chinese Association for Circular Economy, died following an arrest (Tatlow, 2016). Despite the popularity of the Chinese documentaries *Beijing Besieged by Waste* and *Under the Dome*, which exposed pollution, not much has changed as far as persecution of environmental protestors is concerned (Babones, 2017; Standaert, 2017).

In Cambodia, the anti-logging activist Chut Wutty was murdered following his protests (Vrieze and Naren, 2012; Global Witness, 2013). In 2016, three employees of ENGOs were convicted without evidence or proper trial in Cambodia (The Economist, 2016).

In the Middle East, there are similar cases. Reports have emerged, for instance, of environmental activists being imprisoned and tortured (Human Rights Watch, 2019; Margit, 2019).

Since the turn of the century in the United States, radical environmentalists have been labeled a number one terrorist threat (Liddick, 2006). In *The War Against the Greens*, David Helvarg (1989) describes Texan ranchers and loggers uniting against the environmentalists (p. 359). In the era of President Donald Trump, more indirect forms of anti-environmentalism have been reported (Gresko et al., 2019). Media articles have revealed a range of examples of institutional anti-environmentalism, including manipulation of bodies dealing with environmental protection and the cutting of funding for research into effects of climate change (e.g. Davenport and Landler, 2019) and biodiversity loss (Milman, 2019).

<a> ANTI-ENVIRONMENTALISM IN ACADEMIA

Indirect or passive anti-environmentalism can be equally devastating, and perhaps even more so because its consequences are more covert. One type of academic anti-environmentalism can be summed up as “denial”, or in some cases, “denial of denial”. Bjørn Lomborg (2001), for example, argues that claims of overpopulation, declining energy resources, deforestation, the loss of biodiversity, and climate change are not supported by scientific data. In his later work, Lomborg (2010) seems to accept the reality of climate change (thus denies denial), but remains very optimistic about easy techno-fix solutions. Especially in the United States, the industry-supported think tanks such as the Breakthrough Institute, promote scepticism about the scientific evidence of climate change or biodiversity loss as a key tactic of the anti-environmental counter-movement (Jacques, 2012) and stimulate techno-optimism (Kopnina et al., 2020) that frames environmentalists as overtly alarmist and pessimist. The politically and media-orchestrated “shallow” forms of anti-environmentalism pervade other arenas that shape broader cultural views and values (Norgaard, 2006).

A more tacit anti-environmentalism is the promotion of economic growth policies by governments that result in an increase in production and consumption and thus put escalating pressure on wild places, framed as ‘natural resources’ (Crist, 2012). This support of one type of economy-centred discourse simultaneously distances other discourses, creating what Norgaard (2006) describes as *collective avoiding*. Emotions play a pivotal role in this social organization of denial, with various psychological and socio-cultural factors responsible for reasons why people prefer to avoid or contradict scientific evidence. Emotion management, and social narratives, according to Norgaard, is central to denial, “perspectival selectivity” and “selective interpretation.”

Recently, though, indirect anti-environmentalism has appeared from an unexpected source, from academic disciplines that have ‘environment’, ‘ecology’ or ‘conservation’ in their titles, namely environmental anthropology, political ecology and conservation science. The emergence of so-called ‘critical social science’ and the ‘new conservationists’ (Kopnina et al 2018), exposed by the ‘Future of Conservation’ debate, provided a venue for moral attacks against both the underlying ethic and practice of conservation, as well as against a generalized group of ‘environmentalists’ (Kopnina et al., 2018).

In the view of these various critical scientists, ‘environmentalists’ endanger poor people’s livelihoods and violate human rights by punishing impoverished poachers and by imposing their own Western and elitist view of nature on poor communities (Kopnina et al., 2018). Some critical social scientists have focused their research and considerations on the social and economic rights of disadvantaged communities, on the unfair distribution of the benefits of conservation, or on the grievances caused by the establishment of protected areas (Brockington, 2002; Holmes, 2013; Büscher, 2014; Duffy et al., 2016). As described in more detail below, environmentalists are portrayed as a generalized group of neoliberal profit-seekers that displace local communities to welcome wealthy tourists (Chapin, 2004; West and Brockington, 2012; Minter et al., 2014). Critical social scientists and new conservationists have argued that environmentalists entrench economic inequality, as they marginalize local communities in order to generate conservation revenue (e.g. West and Brockington, 2012; Baviskar, 2013). While critical social scientists are usually opposed to neoliberalism and the growth economy, the new conservationists actually embrace the capitalist economy (Miller et al., 2014) and see technology as a solution to environmental crises.

Open acknowledgment of anti-environmentalism in academia is rare. A few academics have stated openly their position, such as Kalland (2009) who has acknowledged that his sympathy lies with the whalers and not with whales. In anthropocentrically motivated attacks on conservationists and ‘environmentalists’, the entitlements to the benefits derived from the exploitation of wildlife are often ethically unquestioned – as long as local, vulnerable or poor communities profit from it. Some environmental anthropologists, ecological economists, social geographers, and political ecologists such as Rosaleen Duffy, Bram Büscher, Paige West, Dan Brockington, George Holmes and Robert Fletcher, and organizations such as Cultural Survival have attacked a generalized group of ‘neoliberal

conservationists' that they often broadly label 'environmentalists' (Colchester 2014). Their accusation is that conservation organisations profit from conservation at the expense of poor communities (e.g. Corry, 2011; Nonini, 2013; Fletcher et al., 2015). According to these critics, environmentalists create "dominant discourses about wildlife, poaching, and the extinction crisis" (Holmes, 2013, p. 74) and perpetuate the "politics of *hysteria* in conservation" (Büscher, 2015). West and Brockington (2012, p. 2) state that environmentalism went south and "got snugly in bed with its old enemy, corporate capitalism". Brockington (2008) also speaks of 'celebrity environmentalism', opening his article with the discussion of Edward Abbey's (1975) *Monkey Wrench Gang*, a fictional work written in the 1970s describing a group of environmentalists that sabotaged capitalist industrial development in the USA. While Brockington acknowledges the fact that environmentalists are very diverse, he swiftly moves from fictional American characters in Abbey's book to eco-tourism in poor countries, blaming 'environmentalists' in displacing local communities for the sake of profit. We question the logic of such a comparison.

Supposedly, environmentalists are "wistful[ly] harkening after a 'Green Adolph'" (Schantz, 2003) and 'waging war' on poor people to save biodiversity. According to Duffy and St. John (2013, p. ii), poaching in Sub-Saharan Africa is the result of the historical legacy of colonialism. Likewise, Holmes (2013, p. 75) states that in Amboseli National Park, the resistance of local people to conservation policies in the form of killing of wildlife is akin to the "weapons of the weak". Such local resistance, Holmes continues, "can have some impact in limiting or delaying certain protected area policies," but is "generally unable to seriously challenge the existence of protected areas or their ability to protect biodiversity."

This 'resistance' is excused (or in fact tacitly supported) as long as local people profit from it. For example, according to Von Hellermann (2007), illegal deforestation in Lagos provides a vital source of livelihood for the many farmers and traders, implying that this 'illegality' needs to be questioned or made legal. In a similar way, it is argued that since a lot of poaching occurs among the poor local communities, its criminalization needs to be questioned (Duffy and St. John, 2013; Duffy, 2014; Büscher and Ramutsindela, 2016). These authors pose a loaded question: should the international community deprive developing countries of the 'right' to use their natural resources for the economic benefit of their populations (Duffy and St. John, 2013; Duffy, 2014)?

It needs to be noted that certainly not all anthropologists or social geographers are anthropocentric in their orientation. In her chapter *Requiem for a Roadkill*, anthropologist Jane Desmond (2013) calls for an ethical recognition of animal victimhood. Another anthropologist Barbara Noske (1989) has called her colleagues to heed the deep green side of environmental ethics and engage with animal rights and welfare literature. In environmental ethics, the definition of Land Ethics comes to mind: '[a] thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise' (Leopold, 1949, pp. 224-225). A few decades later, the deep ecology movement has emerged endorsing "biospheric egalitarianism" (Næss, 1973), the view that all living things are alike in having value in their own right, independent of their usefulness to humans.

However, these ethical/philosophical developments have not necessarily affected disciplines most concerned with preservation of nature. Within the field of biological conservation, there is also a group called 'new conservation', such as Kareiva and Marvier (e.g. Kareiva et al., 2011) or the work of the Breakthrough institute (e.g. Shellenberger and Nordhaus, 2004), a conservative think-tank, that comes from a neoliberal stance and yet shares an anthropocentric approach with these critical social scientists (for a discussion of this group see Miller et al., 2014; Doak et al., 2014; Kopnina et al., 2018). Much like the neo-Marxist group of critical social scientists concerned with local communities, the new conservationists and Eco modernists accuse "environmentalists" in being naïve in trying to preserve pristine wilderness.

Let us examine and address the accusations and false claims one by one.

 False claim: ‘Environmentalists evict local communities from their land’

When environmentalism is inspired by ecocentrism or deep ecology, the guiding principle is respect for *all* communities – where the term ‘community’ is used for both humans and nonhumans (Crist, 2012; 2015; Kopnina, 2012a, 2012b, Crist and Kopnina, 2014; Sinclair 2015; Piccolo et al., 2018; Washington et al., 2018). This follows on from Leopold’s (1949) idea of the ‘Land Ethic’, in which humanity is just a plain member of the living community. Many conservation and environmental protection efforts historically in the West were ‘at home’, as in Abbey’s fiction book quoted by Brockington (2008), whereas most evictions historically in the West have been done in the name of ‘progress’ – industrial or municipal development. In some cases that affect communities in more ‘traditional’ settings, it is important to consider the argument that the idea of ‘Indigenous’ or ‘local’ can apply to humans *and* nonhumans alike. When the local human populations push for expansion of agricultural activity, they threaten Indigenous *nonhuman* species. There is thus a need for a careful ethical consideration that balance different interests, rather than an *a priori* privileging of one species (i.e. humans).

To return to the question posed by Duffy (2000): should the international community deprive developing countries of the right to use their natural resources for the economic benefit of their populations? The obvious thing to note here is that the ‘populations’ referred to are purely those of humanity, not the nonhuman world. Another thing to consider is that the only ‘right’ considered is a right for humans, with no consideration of the rights of nature. In addition, the answer depends on what is found normative. In this question, the right of exploitation and the right to benefit economically is seen as a moral priority, and thus critical social scientists see their stance as a “balanced approach to sustainable utilization” (Duffy, 2000) in order to enable ‘sustainable’ economic benefit.

Yet, this assumption has little pragmatic or ethical grounding because, practically speaking, it is highly questionable whether there will be any ‘natural resources’ to go around. There is a significant difference between prohibiting some activities, such as hunting in certain areas, and thus endangering one part of cultural tradition – and physically endangering individual animals, groups or even entire species with extinction. Research shows that unrestricted access to land or even traditional agricultural activity can lead to over-exploitation when done with a greater number of people and in a greater number of localities, by using, for example, slash-and-burn techniques (Henley, 2011). Hunting endangered species as ‘bushmeat’ to the point of extinction has become common (Benítez-López et al., 2019), especially in situations where local communities have expanded both demographically and in terms of consumptive and economic practices (Ripple et al., 2016). Ethically, it is simply not explained what gives one single species the right to use all other species as resources for its own benefit (Crist, 2012).

Despite the dangers that expansion of local communities’ activity poses to wildlife, it is not the ‘environmentalists’ that cause evictions but mostly local authorities, mining or logging companies, agricultural plantation owners, development agencies, and other stakeholders that seek to make even more profit off the land (Borras et al., 2012). While Indigenous species of nonhumans are wiped out, and Indigenous people are driven from their land by ‘developers’, ‘conservation’ as the generalized practice is blamed and used as a ‘scape-goat’. As Crist (2015, p. 93) has stated:

The literature challenging traditional conservation strategies as locking people out, and as locking away sources of human livelihood, rarely tackles either the broader distribution of poverty or its root social causes; rather, strictly protected areas are scapegoated, and wild nature, once again, is targeted to take the fall for the purported betterment of people, while domination and exploitation of nature remain unchallenged. The prevailing mindset of humanity’s entitlement to avail itself of the natural world without limitation is easy if tacitly, invoked by arguments that demand that wilderness ... offer up its “natural resources”—in the name of justice.

It is actually often environmentalists from local communities that take a stance against displacement, land grabbing and rapacious industrial or agricultural development, as described in the cases of environmentalists who stood up for nature above. What is responsible for evictions of people from their land are industrial or agricultural corporate players, local authorities and all those trying to make a profit, not ‘environmentalists’.

** False Caim: ‘Environmentalists violate human rights by punishing impoverished poachers’**

As Goodall (2015) has stated, poachers are overwhelmingly not impoverished people from local communities but highly organized criminal networks. When talking about ‘celebrity conservationists’, Brockington does not explain that the ‘late’ George and Joy Adamson and Diane Fossey were brutally murdered when trying to defend animals. Nor does Brockington mention the fact that the fighters against the illegal ivory trade, such as Esmond Bradley Martin (Van der Zee, 2018) or Wayne Lotter, a South African wildlife conservationist were murdered (IUCN, 2017). Is this the fame that the supposed “celebrity conservationists enjoy” (Brockington, 2008, p. 563), along with hundreds of local park guards killed defending wildlife, such as Venant Mumbere Muvesevese and Fidèle Mulonga Mulegalega, who were murdered in Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Vidal, 2016)?

** False claim: ‘Environmentalists are Western neo-colonial elitists’**

The sad legacy of murdered, tortured and ostracized environmentalists across the globe serves as evidence that environmentalism is widespread among non-Western nations, and that the environmental movement is *not* at all a Western (elitist, rich, Euro-American etc.) enterprise, as critics claim, but in fact a truly global phenomenon. Grassroots environmentalism indeed knows many variations, and it transcends national and racial boundaries (e.g. Dunlap and York, 2008). While there is mounting evidence that environmentalism is a cross-cultural phenomenon (e.g. Shoreman-Ouimet and Kopnina, 2015b; Milfont and Schultz, 2016), critical social scientists insist that environmentalists are Western elitists. It is certainly ironic that most people who make these accusations have comfortable academic appointments and steady jobs in Western universities. It is strange to see the word ‘elite’ being used in such a way, supposedly outside of the cynical politics of grievance studies (Lindsay et al., 2018).

While the list of Western conservationists and environmentalists continues to lengthen, there is an even longer list of Indigenous environmental activists (Kopnina, 2015; Shoreman-Ouimet and Kopnina, 2015b). Besides the internationally recognized activists, such as the founder of the Green Belt Movement, Wangari Muta Maathai, there are many less-known non-Western activists, many of whom have been murdered for defending nature, including Jairo Mora Sandoval, Berta Cáceres Flores, and Isidro Baldenegro López, all of whom are described earlier in the chapter.

When Brockington (2008) talks of ‘celebrity environmentalism’ he mentions “African celebrity conservationists” who supposedly have a “dual claim to authenticity” to promote their extravagant and profit-driven cause:

First, they represent ‘the real Africa’, the people-less Eden that is popularly believed to have existed before it was spoilt by discovery, exploration, and development ...
Second, their common motif is closeness to and communion with nature. Consider Jane Goodall, the late George and Joy Adamson, Iain Douglas-Hamilton, Cynthia Moss and the late Diane Fossey. All are famous for their special closeness to large charismatic wildlife ... Many people yearn for the sort of intimacy with wildlife and nature which celebrity conservationists enjoy. (Brockington, 2008, p. 563)

There is a special disjuncture between the anthropocentrism of environmental justice (just for people) proponents and their lofty ideas of equity and equality, and sometimes a distinct

ferocity in the way it is expressed. This is amplified by the supporters' humanistic rhetoric and moral outspokenness. While the 'critical social scientists' have a point about criticizing neoliberal *conservation* (such as the new conservationists) that only aims to profit from biodiversity, they also create a kind of normative ethical climate in which only the rich Western 'exploiters' and the poor Indigenous/local (human) 'sufferers' matter. The interests of *Indigenous* nonhuman species (who, evolutionarily, have been Indigenous to the place longer than human groups) are simply left out of any moral consideration.

The accusation is that the generalized group of 'environmentalists' create "dominant discourses" (Holmes, 2013, p. 74) and are said to perpetuate the "politics of *hysteria* in conservation" (Büscher, 2015). This seems to actually perpetuate another rhetoric – that of human supremacy and domination over every other living being on this planet (Crist, 2012). At the same time, the polemic against environmentalists seems to excuse blatant human rights abuses and even murder of those that stand up for nature. This testifies to the worse kind of endorsement of planet-wide colonization of ethics and action by one single species under the guise of caring about power inequalities.

** False claim: 'Environmentalism got snugly in bed with its old enemy, corporate capitalism'**

While some critical social scientists have made good points warning about 'conservation for profit' or 'neoliberal conservation' and the dangers of commodification for capitalist accumulation, it is certainly not true that the generalized group of 'conservationists' and 'environmentalists', especially of the kind discussed in examples at the beginning of this chapter, are complacent in "getting into bed with the enemy" (West and Brockington, 2012). There is an irony here, in that the only group that could truly be said to be 'neoliberal' in conservation are the 'new conservation' movement, who are just as anthropocentric as the critical social scientists (Miller et al., 2014; Koppina et al., 2018). The issue here is that both new conservation and critical social science groups appear not to recognize the type of environmentalism that is urgently needed for addressing the most severe conservation problems such as biodiversity loss and extinction. Critical social scientists imply that only when social inequalities are resolved, the problems will cease, while new conservation proponents suggest that economic development and technology will solve the problems. The critical social scientists do not provide data to support the claim that societies in which social inequality has been properly addressed are a solution to the biodiversity crisis (nor do they supply an example of such societies), while new conservation proponents fail to show how economic growth and technology can solve this crisis.

In fact, as witnessed by all objective biodiversity measures (IUCN, 2017, IPBES, 2019), the problems are far from solved. Environmental problems still occur in Communist or socialist countries such as China or Vietnam and relatively egalitarian, technologically advanced and high-GDP Scandinavian countries. While the Communist and socialist countries might actually have a worse track record concerning human rights in relation to persecution of environmentalists (as indicated in some examples above, e.g. The Economist, 2015; Tatlou, 2016; Standaert, 2017; Nguen and Datzberger, 2018), the high-GDP capitalist countries, despite the 'superior' technology and economic base to supposedly enter the era of 'eco-modernism' (BI), tend to have the highest levels of consumption (e.g. Eurostat, 2017; Grunwald, 2018).

As opposed to a more "left" (socialist, neo-Marxist) critical social scientists, however, these eco-optimists see neoliberal capitalism and technological and industrial progress as a solution for environmental problems. The founding fathers of Breakthrough Institute, Shellenberger and Nordhaus (2004) do not deny the severity of biodiversity loss, but promote a "post-environmental approach" warning environmentalists to "stop trying to scare the pants off of the American public"; to recognize that "the solution to the ecological crises wrought by modernity, technology, and progress will be more modernity, technology, and

progress". Thus, it seems that it is not environmentalists that got snugly in bed with capitalism, but new conservation, Eco modernist and other proponents of industrial growth.

** The underlying ethics of anti-environmentalism in academia**

In either way, "environmentalists" are portrayed as either neo-colonial, naïve, or misanthropic. Anthropocentric orientation, simply put, is one over-arching theme that links the critique of both critical social scientists and new conservationists (Kopnina et al., 2018). The critical social science camp can be positioned to the far left of the political spectrum, and many political ecologists can be classified as neo-Marxist. Neo-Marxist ideology is embodied in Shantz's (2003) critique of environmentalism as an anti-worker movement, stating that the "fundamentalist versions of ecology", exemplified according to the author by the theory of deep ecology and the social movement Earth First!, have mistakenly proposed social scarcity as a means to overcome natural scarcity. According to Shantz, because deep ecologists do not engage with capitalist forces of power, they have led away from an analysis of the power relations, which underlie social inequality and the destruction of nature. Shantz uses the terms 'neo-Malthusian' and 'anti-worker perspectives', blaming environmentalists in shifting responsibility for ecological crises away from capitalist structures of inequality and towards personal consumption practices. More generally, neo-Marxist political ecologists and environmental anthropologists tend to discount population growth, demographic pressures on the environment and individual responsibility for ecological degradation. In fact, instead of the 'green Hitlers' imagined by neo-Marxist critiques (e.g. Shantz, 2003), the war is waged in the name of the same power critical social scientists try to expose, that of rapacious capitalist development. We need to add here that the lived experience of socialism in regard to nature conservation, if this is seen as an alternative to capitalism, is not much more harmonious, judging from atrocities against human rights and nature committed by nominally Communist (and in practice socialist) regimes (see discussion in Kopnina, 2016c). The real culprit of environmental destruction is industrial and agribusiness development and the cult of economic growth (present in both socialist and capitalist countries) as well as population growth (Washington et al., 2018).

Some are more positioned to the 'right', such as new conservationists (Miller et al., 2014; Doak et al 2014; Kopnina et al., 2018). The Breakthrough Institute (BI) also clearly falls into this category in their support of 'eco-modernism' (<https://ecomodernistmanifesto.squarespace.com/>). As discussed in the section above, however, what unites both the leftist critical social scientists and the conservative new conservationists is their strong anthropocentric stance (Kopnina et al., 2018). Thus, while there are differences between new conservation (more market-oriented, neoliberal, growth-oriented, belief in technology as a solution) and critical social scientists (neo-Marxist, anti-capitalist, anti-growth, belief in social equality as a solution), both tend to be anthropocentric, especially when generalizing and criticizing environmentalists and their causes.

<a> AN ALTERNATIVE VISION FOR SURVIVAL: ECOCENTRISM, ECOJUSTICE AND ECODEMOCRACY

Washington et al. (2017, p. 35) note:

Ecocentrism is the broadest term for worldviews that recognize intrinsic value in all lifeforms and ecosystems themselves, including their abiotic components.

Anthropocentrism, in contrast, values other lifeforms and ecosystems insofar as they are valuable for human wellbeing, preferences, and interests.

Ecocentrism rejects the dualistic worldview common in Western society where humans are seen as separate from nature, in favor of a more holistic worldview of humans being part of nature. Ecocentrism has been conceptualized from the early twentieth century but has been

recently revisited in the writings of, among others, Curry (2011); Rolston (2012); Gray (2013); Crist (2015); Kopnina (2016a; 2016b); Strang (2017), Washington et al. (2017); Piccolo et al. (2018); and Washington (2019).

Inspired by ecocentric thought, Vilka (1997) makes the case for ‘ethical extensionalism’, where intrinsic value has extended from 1) just humanity; 2) to sentient beings; 3) to all of life; 4) to ecosystems; 5) to geodiversity; 6) to the whole planet (Washington 2019). Curry (2011) also supports the idea that existing human ethics can be ‘extended’ to address the current ecological crisis, showing that a truly ecological ethic is both possible and urgently needed. A major implication of ecocentrism is the idea of ecological justice, in which nonhuman nature, like the human species, is considered to also deserve justice (Baxter, 2005; Washington et al., 2018). Another implication of ecocentrism is the need to make governance more Earth-centred. Gray and Curry (2016) proposed the following definition of an ecocentrically motivated democracy or ‘ecodemocracy’:

Groups and communities using decision-making systems that respect the principles of human democracy while explicitly extending valuation to include the intrinsic value of non-human nature, with the ultimate goal of evaluating human wants equally to those of other species and the living systems that make up the ecosphere. (p. 21)

In ecodemocracy, the intrinsic value should be assigned both to biotic and abiotic components of the ecosphere (Gray, 2013), such as the geodiversity of landforms, rivers and soil. All aspects of ecocentrism (including ecojustice and ecodemocracy) recognize the fact that species extinction is moral evil (Cafaro and Primack, 2014). In this framing, an alternative for the survival of nonhuman species – *and* human cultural survival – is to embrace biospheric egalitarianism and ecojustice (Kopnina, 2014, 2015, 2016a, 2016b; Shoreman-Ouimet and Kopnina, 2015a, 2015b; Strang 2017; Washington et al., 2018). In this context, the objective of keeping the wild for the sake of the wild (Wuerthner et al., 2014; Wakild, 2015; Washington, 2018; Johns, 2020) offers a moral and legal basis to counteract anti-environmentalism. A deeper problem with anti-environmentalism in academia is the lack of legal, political and ethical consideration of nonhumans as perhaps the most important stakeholders in their own destiny. Their voice gets ignored (Gray and Curry, 2019), just because we do not speak their language. The need to consider the more humble human place in nature and nature’s legal rights has been expressed in two significant articles in *Science* (Crist et al., 2018; Chapron et al., 2019).

<a> CONCLUSION

There are numerous instances of Indigenous people and local individuals that have defended nature across the globe, when local governments, or indeed international conservation organizations, have failed. Concern about the environmental crisis is present *everywhere* in the world. This chapter has considered the worrying extent of direct and violent anti-environmentalism, with hundreds of environmental activists are killed each year around the world (a number that seems to be growing). Most of these are people in developing nations seeking to conserve their land and nature.

The chapter then analyzed anti-environmentalism within academia, considering the various accusations made about conservation and environmentalism. The chapter then considered the underlying ethics within academia that is responsible for anti-environmentalism, showing that the key cause was a deep (if never openly declared) anthropocentrism that amounts to human supremacy. This has led to a situation where some espousing ‘nature conservation’ now argue that it should be undertaken not for the benefit of nature, or because society upholds a commitment to ecojustice, but purely for the benefit of humans, predicated only on social justice concerns. The chapter then concluded by considering an alternative ethic for survival – ecocentrism, ecojustice and ecodemocracy. If academia were to embrace such an ethic, then anti-environmentalism would wither away, and we could all move forward constructively to ethics and justice that embraces both humanity

and the rest of nature. Given that society is fully dependent on nature to survive, we believe such an ethic makes excellent practical – as well as ethical – sense.

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