

Para Irene Castells Oliván,  
historiadora de utopías

# The Power of Identity

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Manuel Castells

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## The Greening of the Self: the Environmental Movement

*The Green approach to politics is a kind of celebration. We recognize that each of us is part of the world's problems, and we are also part of the solution. The dangers and potentials for healing are not just outside us. We begin to work exactly where we are. There is no need to wait until conditions become ideal. We can simplify our lives and live in ways that affirm ecological and human values. Better conditions will come because we have begun . . . It can therefore be said that the primary goal of Green politics is an inner revolution, "the greening of the self."*

Petra Kelly, *Thinking Green*<sup>1</sup>

If we are to appraise social movements by their historical productivity, namely, by their impact on cultural values and society's institutions, the environmental movement of the last quarter of this century has earned a distinctive place in the landscape of human adventure. In the 1990s, 80 percent of Americans, and over two-thirds of Europeans consider themselves environmentalists; party and candidates can hardly be elected to office without "greening" their platform; governments and international institutions alike multiply programs, special agencies, and legislation to protect nature, improve the quality of life and, ultimately, save the Earth in the long term and ourselves in the short term. Corporations, including some notorious polluters, have included environmentalism in their public relations agenda, as well as among their most promising new markets. And throughout the globe, the old, simplistic opposition between development for the poor and conservation for the rich has been transformed into a multi-layered debate over the actual content of sustainable development for each country, city, and region. To be sure, most of our funda-

<sup>1</sup> *In Essays by Petra Kelly (1947-1992)* (Kelly, 1994: 39-40). In this quote, she refers to Joanna Macy's "the greening of the self" (Macy, 1991).

fundamental problems concerning the environment remain, since their treatment requires a transformation of modes of production and consumption, as well as of our social organization and personal lives. Global warming looms as a lethal threat, the rain forest still burns, toxic chemicals are deeply into the food chain, a sea of poverty denies life, and governments play games with people's health, as exemplified by Major's madness with British cows. Yet, the fact that all these issues, and many others, are in the public debate, and that a growing awareness has emerged of their interdependent, global character, creates the foundation for their treatment, and, maybe, for a reorientation of institutions and policies toward an environmentally responsible socio-economic system. The multifaceted environmental movement that emerged from the late 1960s in most of the world, with its strong points in the United States and Northern Europe, is to a large extent at the root of a dramatic reversal in the ways in which we think about the relationship between economy, society, and nature, thus inducing a new culture.<sup>2</sup>

It is somewhat arbitrary, however, to speak of the environmental movement, since it is so diverse in its composition, and varies so much in its expressions from country to country, and between cultures. Thus, before assessing its transformative potential, I will attempt a typological differentiation of various components of environmentalism, and use examples for each type, to bring the argument down to earth. Then, I shall proceed to a broader elaboration on the relationship between environmentalists' themes, and fundamental dimensions on which structural transformation takes place in our society: the struggles over the role of science and technology, over the control of space and time, and over the construction of new identities. Having characterized the environmental movements in their social diversity and in their cultural sharing, I shall analyze their means and ways of acting on society at large, thus exploring the issue of their institutionalization, and their relationship to the state. Finally, consideration will be given to the growing linkage between environmental movements and social struggles, both locally and globally, along the increasingly popular perspective of environmental justice.

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of the environmental movement, see (among other sources) Holliman (1990); Gottlieb (1993); Kamieniecki (1993); Shabecoff (1993); Dalton (1994); Alley et al. (1995); Diani (1995); Brulle (1996); Wapner (1996).

## The Creative Cacophony of Environmentalism: a Typology

Collective action, politics, and discourses grouped under the name of environmentalism are so diverse as to challenge the idea of a movement. And, yet, I argue that it is precisely this cacophony of theory and practice that characterizes environmentalism as a new form of decentralized, multifunctional, network-oriented, pervasive social movement. Besides, as I will try to show, there are some fundamental themes that run across most, if not all, environmentally related collective action. However, for the sake of clarity, it seems helpful to proceed in the analysis of this movement on the basis of one distinction and one typology.

The distinction is between environmentalism and ecology. By *environmentalism* I refer to all forms of collective behavior that, in their discourse and in their practice, aim at correcting destructive forms of relationship between human action and its natural environment, in opposition to the prevailing structural and institutional logic. By *ecology*, in my sociological approach, I understand a set of beliefs,

Chart 3.1 Typology of Environmental Movements

Type (Example)	Identity	Adversary	Goal
Conservation of nature (Group of Ten, USA)	Nature lovers	Uncontrolled development	Wilderness
Defense of own space (Not in my Back Yard)	Local community	Polluters	Quality of life/health
Counter-culture, deep ecology (Earth first!, ecofeminism)	The green self	Industrialism, technocracy, and patriarchalism	Ecotopia
Save the planet (Greenpeace)	Internationalist eco-warriors	Unfettered global development	Sustainability
Green politics (Die Grünen)	Concerned citizens	Political establishment	Counter-power

theories, and projects that consider humankind as a component of a broader ecosystem and wish to maintain the system's balance in a dynamic, evolutionary perspective. In my view, environmentalism is ecology in practice, and ecology is environmentalism in theory, but in the following pages I will restrict the use of the term "ecology" to explicit, conscious manifestations of this holistic, evolutionary perspective.

As for the typology, I shall again call upon Alain Touraine's useful characterization of social movements, as presented in chapter 2, to differentiate five major varieties of environmental movement, *as they have manifested themselves in observed practices* in the past two decades, at the international level. I suggest that this typology has general value, although most of the examples are drawn from North American and German experiences because they are the most developed environmental movements in the world, and because I had easier access to this information. Please accept the usual disclaimer about the inevitable reductionism of this, and all typologies, which I hope will be compensated for by examples that will bring the blood and flesh of actual movements into this somewhat abstract characterization.

To undertake our brief journey across the kaleidoscope of environmentalism by means of the proposed typology, you need a map. Chart 3.1 provides it, and requires some explanation. Each type is defined, analytically, by a specific combination of the three characteristics defining a social movement: *identity*, *adversary*, and *goal*. For each type, I identify the precise content of the three characteristics, resulting from observation, using several sources, to which I refer. Accordingly, I give a name to each type, and provide examples of movements that best fit each type. Naturally, in any given movement or organization there may be a mixture of characteristics, but I select, for analytical purposes, those movements that seem to be closer to the ideal type in their actual practice and discourse. After looking at Chart 3.1, you are invited to a brief description of each one of the examples that illustrate the five types, so that distinct voices of the movement can be heard through its cacophony.

The *conservation of nature*, under its different forms, was at the origin of the environmentalist movement in America, as enacted by organizations such as the Sierra Club (founded in San Francisco in 1891 by John Muir), the Audubon Society, or the Wilderness Society.<sup>3</sup> In the early 1980s, old and new mainstream environmental organizations came together in an alliance, known as the Group of Ten, that included, besides the above-cited organizations, the National Parks

<sup>3</sup> Allen (1987); Scarce (1990); Gottlieb (1993); Shabecoff (1993).

and Conservation Association, the National Wildlife Federation, the Natural Resources Defense Council, Izaak Walton League, Defenders of Wildlife, Environmental Defense Fund, and the Environmental Policy Institute. In spite of differences in approach and in their specific field of intervention, what brings together these organizations, and many others created along similar lines, is their pragmatic defense of conservationist causes through the institutional system. In the words of Michael McCloskey, Sierra Club Chairman, their approach can be characterized as "muddling through": "We come out of a mountaineering tradition where you first decide that you're going to climb the mountain. You have a notion of a general route, but you find handholds and the footholds as you go along and you have to adapt and keep changing."<sup>4</sup> Their summit to be climbed is the preservation of wilderness, in its different forms, within reasonable parameters of what can be achieved in the present economic and institutional system. Their adversaries are uncontrolled development, and unresponsive bureaucracies such as the US Bureau of Reclamation, not caring to protect our natural preserve. They define themselves as nature lovers, and appeal to this feeling in all of us, regardless of social differences. They work through and by the institutions, using lobbying very often with great skill and political muscle. They rely on widespread popular support, as well as on donations from well-wishing, wealthy elites, and from corporations. Some organizations, such as the Sierra Club, are very large (about 600,000 members) and are organized in local chapters, whose actions and ideologies vary considerably, and do not always fit with the image of "mainstream environmentalism." Most others, such as the Environmental Defense Fund, focus on lobbying, analyzing, and diffusing information. They often practice coalition politics, but they are careful not to be carried away from their environmental focus, distrusting radical ideologies and spectacular action out of step with the majority of public opinion. However, it would be a mistake to oppose mainstream conservationists to the true, radical environmentalists. For instance, one of the historic leaders of the Sierra Club, David Brower, became a source of inspiration for radical environmentalists. Reciprocally, Dave Foreman, from Earth First!, was, in 1996, on the Board of Directors of the Sierra Club. There is a great deal of osmosis in the relationships between conservationists and radical ecologists, as ideologies tend to take second place to their shared concern about the relentless, multiform destruction of nature. This, in spite of sharp debates and conflicts within a large, diversified movement.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Scarce (1990: 15).

The *mobilization of local communities in defense of their space*, against intrusion of undesirable uses, constitutes the fastest-growing form of environmental action, and the one that perhaps most directly links people's immediate concerns to broader issues of environmental deterioration.<sup>5</sup> Often labeled, somewhat maliciously, the "*Not in my Back Yard*" movement, it developed in the United States first of all under the form of the toxics movement, originated in 1978 during the infamous Love Canal incident of industrial toxic waste dumping in Niagara Falls, New York. Lois Gibbs, the homeowner who gained notoriety because of her fight to defend the health of her son, as well as the value of her home, went on to establish, in 1981, the Citizen's Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes. According to the Clearinghouse's counting, in 1984 there were 600 local groups fighting against toxic dumping in the United States, which increased to 4,687 in 1988. Over time, communities mobilized also against freeway construction, excessive development, and location of hazardous facilities in their proximity. While the movement is local, it is not necessarily localistic, since it often affirms residents' right to the quality of their life in opposition to business or bureaucratic interests. To be sure, life in society is made up of trade-offs among people themselves, as residents, workers, consumers, commuters, and travelers. But what is questioned by these movements is, on the one hand, the bias of location of undesirable materials or activities toward low-income communities and minority inhabited areas; on the other hand, the lack of transparency and participation in decision-making about the uses of space. Thus, citizens call for extended local democracy, for responsible city planning, and for fairness in sharing the burdens of urban/industrial development, while avoiding exposure to hazardous dumping or utilities. As Epstein concludes in her analysis of the movement:

The demand of the toxics/environmental justice movement for a state that has more power to regulate corporations, a state that is accountable to the public rather than the corporations, seems entirely appropriate, and possibly a basis for a broader demand that state power over corporations be reasserted and expanded, and that state power be exercised on behalf of public welfare and especially the welfare of those who are most vulnerable.<sup>6</sup>

In other instances, in middle-class suburbs, residents' mobilizations were more focused on preserving their status quo against non-desired development. Yet, regardless of their class content, all forms of protest

<sup>5</sup> Gottlieb (1993); Szasz (1994); Epstein (1995).

<sup>6</sup> Epstein (1995: 20).

aimed at establishing control over the living environment on behalf of the local community, and in this sense, defensive local mobilizations are certainly a major component of broader environmental movement.

Environmentalism has also nurtured some of the counter-cultures that sprang from the 1960s and 1970s movements. By counter-culture, I understand the deliberate attempt to live according to norms different, and to some extent contradictory, from those institutionally enforced by society, and to oppose those institutions on the ground of alternative principles and beliefs. Some of the most powerful counter-cultural currents in our societies express themselves under the form of abiding only by the laws of nature, and thus affirming the priority of respect for nature over any other human institution. This is why I think it makes sense to include under the notion of *counter-cultural environmentalism* expressions as apparently distinct as radical environmentalists (such as *Earth First!* or the *Sea Shepherds*), the Animal Liberation movement, and ecofeminism.<sup>7</sup> In fact, in spite of their diversity and lack of coordination, most of these movements share the ideas of "deep ecology" thinkers, as represented, for instance, by Norwegian writer Arne Naess. According to Arne Naess and George Sessions, the basic principles of "deep ecology" are:

- (1) The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth have value in themselves. These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.
- (2) Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.
- (3) Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.
- (4) The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires such a decrease.
- (5) Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.
- (6) Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.
- (7) The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly high standard of living. There will be profound awareness of the difference between big and great.
- (8) Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an

<sup>7</sup> For sources, see Adler (1979); Spretnak (1982); Manes (1990); Scarce (1990); Davis (1991); Dobson (1991); Epstein (1991); Moog (1995).

obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes.<sup>8</sup>

To respond to such an obligation, in the late 1970s a number of radical ecologists, led by David Foreman, an ex-Marine turned eco-warrior, created in New Mexico and Arizona *Earth First!*, an uncompromising movement that engaged in civil disobedience and even "ecotage" against dam construction, logging, and other aggressions to nature, thus facing prosecution and jail. The movement, and a number of other organizations that followed suit, were completely decentralized, formed by autonomous "tribes," that would meet periodically, according to the rites and dates of Native American Indians, and decide their own actions. Deep ecology was the ideological foundation of the movement, and it figures prominently in *The Earth First! Reader*, published with a foreword by David Foreman.<sup>9</sup> But equally, if not more, influential was Abbey's novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, about a counter-cultural group of eco-guerrillas, who became role models for many radical ecologists. Indeed, "monkeywrenching" became a synonym for eco-sabotage. In the 1990s, the animal liberation movement, focusing on outright opposition to experimentation with animals, seems to be the most militant wing of ecological fundamentalism.

Ecofeminism is clearly distant from the "macho-tactics" of some of these movements. And yet, ecofeminists share the principle of absolute respect for nature as the foundation of liberation from both patriarchy and industrialism. They see women as victims of the same patriarchal violence that is inflicted upon nature. And so, the restoration of natural rights is inseparable from women's liberation. In the words of Judith Plant:

Historically, women have had no real power in the outside world, no place in decision-making. Intellectual life, the work of the mind, has traditionally not been accessible to women. Women have been generally passive, as has been nature. Today, however, ecology speaks for the earth, for the "other" in human/environmental relations. And ecofeminism, by speaking for the original others, seeks to understand the interconnected roots of all domination, and ways to resist to change.<sup>10</sup>

Some ecofeminists were also inspired by Carolyn Merchant's controversial historical reconstruction, going back to prehistoric, natural

<sup>8</sup> Naess and Sessions (1984), reproduced in Davis (1991: 157-8).

<sup>9</sup> Davis (1991).

<sup>10</sup> Plant (1991:101).

societies, free of male domination, a matriarchal Golden Age, where there was harmony between nature and culture, and where both men and women worshipped nature in the form of the goddess.<sup>11</sup> There has also been, particularly during the 1970s, an interesting connection between environmentalism, spiritual feminism, and neopaganism, sometimes expressed in ecofeminist and non-violent direct action militancy by witches belonging to the craft.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, through a variety of forms, from eco-guerrilla tactics, to spiritualism, going through deep ecology and ecofeminism, radical ecologists link up environmental action and cultural revolution, broadening the scope of an all-encompassing environmental movement, in their construction of *ecotopia*.

*Greenpeace* is the world's largest environmental organization, and probably the one that has most popularized global environmental issues, by its media-oriented, non-violent direct actions.<sup>13</sup> Founded in Vancouver in 1971, around an anti-nuclear protest off the coast of Alaska, and later headquartered in Amsterdam, it has grown into a transnational, networked organization that, as of 1994, had 6 million members worldwide and annual revenues in excess of \$100 million. Its highly distinctive profile as an environmental movement derives from three major components. First, a sense of urgency regarding the imminent demise of life on the planet, inspired by a North American Indian legend: "When the earth is sick and the animals have disappeared, there will come a tribe of peoples from all creeds, colours and cultures who believe in deeds not words and who will restore the Earth to its former beauty. The tribe will be called 'Warriors of Rainbow.'"<sup>14</sup> Secondly, a Quaker-inspired attitude of bearing witness, both as a principle for action, and as a strategy of communication. Thirdly, a business-like, pragmatic attitude, largely influenced by Greenpeace's historic leader and chairman of the board, David McTaggart, "to get things done." No time for philosophical discussions: key issues must be identified by using knowledge and investigative techniques throughout the planet; specific campaigns must be organized on visible targets; spectacular actions geared toward media attention will follow, thus raising a given issue in the public eye, and forcing companies, governments, and international institutions to take action or face further unwarranted publicity. Greenpeace is at the same time a highly centralized organization, and

<sup>11</sup> Merchant (1980); see also Spretnak (1982); Moog (1995).

<sup>12</sup> Adler (1979); Epstein (1991).

<sup>13</sup> Hunter (1979); Eyerman and Jamison (1989); DeMont (1991); Horton (1991); Ostertag (1991); Melchett (1995); Wapner (1995, 1996).

<sup>14</sup> Greenpeace Environmental Fund, cited in Eyerman and Jamison (1989: 110).

a globally decentralized network. It is controlled by a council of country's representatives, a small executive board, and regional trustees for North America, Latin America, Europe, and the Pacific. Its resources are organized in campaigns, each one of them subdivided by issues. In the mid-1990s, major campaigns were: toxic substances, energy and atmosphere, nuclear issues, and ocean/terrestrial ecology. Offices in 30 countries in the world serve to coordinate global campaigns, and raise funds and support, on a national/local basis, but most of the action aims at a global impact since main environmental problems are global. Greenpeace sees as its adversary a model of development characterized by a lack of concern with its consequences on life on the planet. Accordingly, it mobilizes to enforce the principle of environmental sustainability as the overarching principle to which all other policies and activities must be subordinated. Because of the importance of their mission, the "rainbow warriors" are not inclined to engage in debates with other environmental groups, and do not indulge in counter-culture, regardless of individual variation in the attitudes of their huge membership. They are resolutely internationalists, and see the nation-state as the major obstacle to accomplishing control over currently unfettered, destructive development. They are at war against an eco-suicidal model of development, and they aim to deliver immediate results on each front of action, from converting the German refrigeration industry to "green-freeze" technology, thus helping to protect the ozone layer, to influencing the restriction of whaling, and the creation of a whales sanctuary in Antarctica. The "rainbow warriors" are at the crossroads of science for life, global networking, communication technology, and intergenerational solidarity.

*Green politics* does not appear, at first sight, to be a type of movement by itself but, rather, a specific strategy, namely entering the realm of electoral politics on behalf of environmentalism. Yet, a close up of the most important example of green politics, *Die Grünen*, clearly shows that, originally, it was not politics as usual.<sup>15</sup> The German Green party, constituted on January 13, 1980, on the basis of a coalition of grassroots movements, is not strictly speaking an environmental movement, even if it has probably been more effective in advancing the environmental cause in Germany than any other European movement in its country. The major force underlying its formation was the Citizen Initiatives of the late 1970s, mainly organized around the peace and anti-nuclear mobilizations. It uniquely brought

<sup>15</sup> See, among an ocean of sources on the German Green party, Langguth (1984); Hulsberg (1988); Wiesenthal (1993); Scharf (1994); and, particularly, Poguntke (1993) and Frankland (1995).

together veterans of the 1960s movements with feminists who discovered themselves as such by reflecting precisely on the sexism of 1960s revolutionaries, and with youth and educated middle classes concerned with peace, nuclear power, the environment (the forest disease, *waldsterben*), the state of the world, individual freedom, and grassroots democracy.

The creation and rapid success of the Greens (they entered the national parliament in 1983) stemmed from very exceptional circumstances. First of all, there were really no political expressions for social protest in Germany beyond the three main parties that had alternated in power, and even formed a coalition in the 1960s: in 1976, over 99 percent of the vote went to the three parties (Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, and Liberals). Thus, there was a potential disaffected vote, particularly among the youth, waiting for the possibility of expressing itself. Financial political scandals (the Flick affair) had rocked the reputation of all political parties and suggested their reliance on industry's contributions. Furthermore, what political scientists call the "political opportunity structure" supported the strategy of forming a party, and keeping unity among its constituents: among other elements, significant government funds were made available to the movement, and the German electoral law requiring at least 5 percent of the national vote to enter parliament disciplined the otherwise fractious Greens. Most Green voters were young, students, teachers, or members of other categories distant from industrial production, either unemployed (but supported by government), or working for the government. Their agenda included ecology, peace, defense of liberties, protection of minorities and immigrants, feminism, and participatory democracy. Two-thirds of Green party leaders were active participants in various social movements in the 1980s. Indeed, *Die Grünen* presented themselves, in Petra Kelly's words, as an "anti-party party," aimed at "politics based on a new understanding of power, a 'counter-power' that is natural and common to all, to be shared by all, and used by all for all."<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, they rotated representatives elected to office, and took most of the decisions in assemblies, following the anarchist tradition that inspired the Greens more than the Greens would accept. The acid test of real politics by and large dissolved these experiments after a few years, particularly after the 1990 electoral *débâcle*, mainly motivated by the Greens' total misunderstanding of the relevance of German unification, in an attitude coherent with their opposition to nationalism. The latent conflict between the *realos* (pragmatic leaders trying to advance the Green agenda through institutions) and the

<sup>16</sup> Kelly (1994: 37).

*fundis* (loyal to the basic principles of grassroots democracy and ecologism) exploded into the open in 1991, leaving an alliance of centrists and pragmatics in control of the party. Reoriented, and reorganized, the German Green party recovered its strength in the 1990s, entered Parliament again, and won strong positions in regional and local governments, particularly in Berlin, Frankfurt, Bremen, and Hamburg, sometimes governing in alliance with the Social Democrats. Yet, it was not the same party. That is, it had indeed become a political party. Besides, this party had no longer the monopoly of environmental agenda since the Social Democrats, and even the Liberals, became much more open to new ideas put forward by the social movements. Furthermore, Germany in the 1990s was a very different country. There was no danger of war, but of economic decay. Widespread youth unemployment, and the retrenchment of the welfare state became more pressing issues for the "greying" green voters than cultural revolution. The murder of Petra Kelly in 1992, probably by her male companion, who then committed suicide, struck a dramatic chord, suggesting the limits of escaping society in everyday life while leaving untouched fundamental economic, political, and psychological structures. However, through green politics, the Green party became consolidated as the consistent left of *fin-de-siècle* Germany, and the 1970s rebellious generation still kept most of their values when ageing, and transmitted them to their children through the way they lived their lives. Thus, a very different Germany emerged from the green politics experiment, both culturally and politically. But the impossibility of integrating party and movement without inducing either totalitarianism (Leninism), or reformism at the expense of the movement (social democracy), received another historical confirmation as the iron law of social change.

### The Meaning of Greening: Societal Issues and the Ecologists' Challenge

The conservation of nature, the search for environmental quality, and an ecological approach to life are nineteenth-century ideas that, in their distinct expression, remained for a long time confined to enlightened elites of dominant countries.<sup>17</sup> Often they were the preserve of a gentry overwhelmed by industrialization, as for the origins of the Audubon Society in the United States. In other instances, a communal, utopian component was the nest of early political ecologists, as in the case of Kropotkin, that linked for ever

<sup>17</sup> Bramwell (1989, 1994).

anarchism and ecology, in a tradition best represented in our time by Murray Bookchin. But in all cases, and for almost one century, it remained a restricted intellectual trend, aimed primarily at influencing the consciousness of powerful individuals, who would foster conservationist legislation or donate their wealth to the good cause of nature. Even when social alliances were forged (for example, between Robert Marshall and Catherine Bauer in the United States in the 1930s), their policy outcome was packaged in a way in which economic and social welfare concerns were paramount.<sup>18</sup> Although there were influential, courageous pioneers, such as Alice Hamilton and Rachel Carson in the United States, it was only in the late 1960s that, in the United States, in Germany, in Western Europe, then rapidly diffusing to the entire world, North and South, West and East, a mass movement emerged, both at the grassroots and in public opinion. Why so? Why did ecological ideas suddenly catch fire in the planet's dried prairies of senselessness? I propose the hypothesis that there is a direct correspondence between the themes put forward by the environmental movement and the fundamental dimensions of the new social structure, the network society, emerging from the 1970s onwards: science and technology as the basic means and goals of economy and society; the transformation of space; the transformation of time; and the domination of cultural identity by abstract, global flows of wealth, power, and information constructing real virtuality through media networks. To be sure, in the chaotic universe of environmentalism we can find all these themes and, at the same time, none of them in specific cases. However, I contend that there is an implicit, coherent ecological discourse that cuts across various political orientations and social origins within the movement, and that provides the framework from which different themes are emphasized at different moments and for different purposes.<sup>19</sup> There are, naturally, sharp conflicts and strong disagreements in and between components of the environmental movement. Yet, these disagreements are more frequently about tactics, priorities, and language, than about the basic thrust in linking up the defense of specific environments to new human values. At the risk of oversimplification, I will synthesize the main lines of discourse present in the environmental movement in four major themes.

<sup>18</sup> Gottlieb (1993).

<sup>19</sup> For evidence of the presence, and relevance, of these themes in the environmental movements of several countries, see Dickens (1990); Dobson (1990); Scarce (1990); Epstein (1991); Zisk (1992); Coleman and Coleman (1993); Gottlieb (1993); Shabecoff (1993); Bramwell (1994); Porrit (1994); Riechmann and Fernandez Buey (1994); Moog (1995).

First, *an ambiguous, deep connection with science and technology*. As Bramwell writes: "the development of Green ideas was the revolt of science against science that occurred towards the end of the 19th century in Europe and North America."<sup>20</sup> This revolt intensified and diffused, in the 1970s, simultaneously with the information technology revolution, and with the extraordinary development of biological knowledge through computer modeling, that took place in the aftermath. Indeed, science and technology play a fundamental, albeit contradictory role in the environmental movement. On the one hand, there is a profound distrust of the goodness of advanced technology, leading in some extreme manifestations to neo-Luddite ideologies, as represented by Kirpatrick Sale. On the other hand, the movement largely relies on gathering, analyzing, interpreting, and diffusing scientific information about the interaction between man-made artifacts and the environment, sometimes with a high degree of sophistication. Major environmental organizations usually have scientists on their staff, and in most countries there is a tight connection between scientists and academics, and environmental activists.

*Environmentalism is a science-based movement*. Sometimes it is bad science, but it none the less pretends to know what happens to nature, and to humans, revealing the truth hidden by vested interests of industrialism, capitalism, technocracy, and bureaucracy. While criticizing the domination of life by science, ecologists use science to oppose science on behalf of life. The advocated principle is not the negation of knowledge, but superior knowledge: the wisdom of a holistic vision, able to reach beyond piecemeal approaches and short-sighted strategies geared toward the satisfaction of basic instincts. In this sense, environmentalism aims at retaking social control over the products of the human mind before science and technology take on a life of their own, with machines finally imposing their will on us, and on nature, a humankind's ancestral fear.

*Struggles over structural transformation are tantamount to fighting for historical redefinition of the two fundamental, material expressions of society: space and time*. And, indeed, *control over space, and the emphasis on locality* is another major, recurrent theme of various components of the environmental movement. I proposed, in volume I, chapter 6, the idea of a fundamental opposition emerging in the network society between two spatial logics, that of the space of flows and that of the space of places. The space of flows organizes the simultaneity of social practices at a distance, by means of telecommunications and information systems. The space of places privileges social interaction and institutional organization on the basis of physical contiguity.

<sup>20</sup> Bramwell (1994: vii).

What is distinctive of new social structure, the network society, is that most dominant processes, concentrating power, wealth, and information, are organized in the space of flows. Most human experience, and meaning, are still locally based. The disjunction between the two spatial logics is a fundamental mechanism of domination in our societies, because it shifts the core economic, symbolic, and political processes away from the realm where social meaning can be constructed and political control can be exercised. Thus, the emphasis of ecologists on locality, and on the control by people of their living spaces, is a challenge to a basic lever of the new power system. Even in the most defensive expressions, such as in the struggles labeled "Not in my Back Yard," to assert the priority of local living over the uses of a given space by "outside interests," such as companies dumping toxics or airports extending their runways, bears the profound meaning of denying abstract priorities of technical or economic interests over actual experiences of actual uses by actual people. What is challenged by environmental localism is the loss of connection between these different functions or interests under the principle of mediated representation by abstract, technical rationality exercised by uncontrolled business interests and unaccountable technocracies. Thus, the logic of the argument develops into yearning for small-scale government, privileging the local community and citizen participation: *grassroots democracy is the political model implicit in most ecological movements*. In the most elaborated alternatives, the control over space, the assertion of place as source of meaning, and the emphasis on local government, is linked up to the self-management ideals of the anarchist tradition, including small-scale production, and emphasis on self-sufficiency, which leads to assumed austerity, the critique of conspicuous consumption, and the substitution of use value of life for exchange value of money. To be sure, people protesting against toxic dumping in their neighborhood are not anarchists, and few of them would actually be ready to transform the entire fabric of their lives as they are. But the internal logic of the argument, the connection between the defense of one's place against the imperatives of the space of flows, and the strengthening of economic and political bases of locality, allow for the sudden identification of some of these linkages in the public awareness when a symbolic event takes place (such as the building of a nuclear power plant). So are created the conditions for convergence between everyday life's problems and projects for alternative society: this is how social movements are made.

Alongside space, *the control over time is at stake in the network society, and the environmental movement is probably the most important actor in projecting a new, revolutionary temporality*. This matter is as important as

complex, and requires slow-pace elaboration. In volume I, chapter 7, I proposed a distinction (on the basis of current debates in sociology and history, as well as of Leibniz's and Innis's philosophies of time and space) between three forms of temporality: clock time, timeless time, and glacial time. *Clock time*, characteristic of industrialism, for both capitalism and statism, was/is characterized by the chronological sequencing of events, and by the discipline of human behavior to a predetermined schedule creating scarcity of experience out of institutionalized measurement. *Timeless time*, characterizing dominant processes in our societies, occurs when the characteristics of a given context, namely, the informational paradigm and the network society, induce systemic perturbation in the sequential order of phenomena performed in that context. This perturbation may take the form of compressing the occurrence of phenomena, aiming at instantaneity (as in "instant wars" or split-second financial transactions), or else by introducing random discontinuity in the sequence (as in the hyper-text of integrated, electronic media communication). Elimination of sequencing creates undifferentiated timing, thus annihilating time. In our societies, most dominant, core processes are structured in timeless time, yet most people are dominated by and through clock time.

There is still another form of time, as conceived and proposed in social practice: *glacial time*. In Lash and Urry's original formulation, the notion of glacial time implies that "the relation between humans and nature is very long-term and evolutionary. It moves back out of immediate human history and forwards into a wholly unspecifiable future."<sup>21</sup> Developing their elaboration, I propose the idea that the environmental movement is precisely characterized by the project of introducing a "glacial time" perspective in our temporality, in terms of both consciousness and policy. Ecological thinking considers interaction between all forms of matter in an evolutionary perspective. The idea of limiting the use of resources to renewable resources, central to environmentalism, is predicated precisely on the notion that alteration of basic balances in the planet, and in the universe, may, *over time*, undo a delicate ecological equilibrium, with catastrophic consequences. The holistic notion of integration between humans and nature, as presented in "deep ecology" writers, does not refer to a naive worshipping of pristine natural landscapes, but to the fundamental consideration that the relevant unit of experience is not each individual, or for that matter, historically existing human communities. To merge ourselves with our cosmological self we need first to change the notion of time, to feel "glacial time" running through our

<sup>21</sup> Lash and Urry (1994: 243).

lives, to sense the energy of stars flowing in our blood, and to assume the rivers of our thoughts endlessly merging in the boundless oceans of multiformed living matter. In very direct, personal terms, glacial time means to measure our life by the life of our children, and of the children of the children of our children. Thus, managing our lives and institutions for them, as much as for us, is not a New Age cult, but old-fashioned care-taking of our descendants, that is of our own flesh and blood. To propose sustainable development as intergenerational solidarity brings together healthy selfishness and systemic thinking in an evolutionary perspective. The anti-nuclear movement, one of the most potent sources of the environmental movement, based its radical critique of nuclear power on the long-term effects of radioactive waste, besides immediate safety problems, thus bridging to the safety of generations thousands of years from us. To some extent, interest in the preservation of and respect for indigenous cultures extends backwards the concern for all forms of human existence coming from different times, and affirming that we are them, and they are us. It is this *unity of the species, then of matter as a whole, and of its spatiotemporal evolution*, that is called upon implicitly by the environmental movement, and explicitly by deep ecologist and ecofeminist thinkers.<sup>22</sup> The material expression unifying different claims and themes of environmentalism is their alternative temporality, demanding the assumption by society's institutions of the slow-pace evolution of our species in its environment, with no end to our cosmological being, as long as the universe keeps expanding from the moment/place of its shared beginning. Beyond the time-bounded shores of subdued clock time, still experienced by most people in the world, the historical struggle over new temporality takes place between the annihilation of time in the recurrent flows of computer networks, and the realization of glacial time in the conscious assumption of our cosmological self.

Through these fundamental struggles over the appropriation of science, space, and time, ecologists induce *the creation of a new identity*, a biological identity, *a culture of the human species as a component of nature*. This socio-biological identity does not imply denial of historical cultures. Ecologists bear respect for folk cultures, and indulge in cultural authenticity from various traditions. Yet, their objective enemy is state nationalism. This is because the nation-state, by definition, is bound to assert its power over a given territory. Thus, it breaks the unity of humankind, as well as the interrelation between territories, undermining the sharing of our global ecosystem. In the words of David McTaggart, the historic leader of Greenpeace International: "The biggest threat we must address is nationalism. In the next

<sup>22</sup> Diamond and Orenstein (1990); McLaughlin (1993).

century we are going to be faced with issues which simply cannot be addressed on a nation-by-nation basis. What we are trying to do is work together internationally, despite centuries of nationalist prejudice."<sup>23</sup> In what is only an apparent contradiction, ecologists are, at the same time, localists and globalists: globalists in the management of time, localists in the defense of space. Evolutionary thinking and policy require a global perspective. People's harmony with their environment starts in their local community.

This *new identity as a species*, that is a socio-biological identity, can be easily superimposed on multifaceted, historical traditions, languages, and cultural symbols, but it will hardly mix with state-nationalist identity. Thus, to some extent, environmentalism supersedes the opposition between the culture of real virtuality, underlying global flows of wealth and power, and the expression of fundamentalist cultural or religious identities. It is the only global identity put forward on behalf of all human beings, regardless of their specific social, historical, or gender attachments, or of their religious faith. However, since most people do not live their lives cosmologically, and the assumption of our shared nature with mosquitoes still poses some tactical problems, the critical matter for the influence of new ecological culture is its ability to weave threads of singular cultures into a human hypertext, made out of historical diversity and biological commonality. I call this culture *green culture* (why invent another term when millions of people already name it like this), and I define it in Petra Kelly's terms: "We must learn to think and act from our hearts, to recognize the interconnectedness of all living creatures, and to respect the value of each thread in the vast web of life. This is a spiritual perspective, and it is the foundation of all Green politics... Green politics requires us to be both tender and subversive."<sup>24</sup> The tenderness of subversion, the subversion of tenderness: we are a long way from the instrumentalist perspective that has dominated the industrial era, in both its capitalist and statist versions. And we are in direct contradiction with the dissolution of meaning in the flows of faceless power that constitute the network society. Green culture, as proposed in and by a multifaceted environmental movement, is the antidote to the culture of real virtuality characterizing dominant processes in our societies.

Thus, the science of life versus life under science; local control over places versus an uncontrollable space of flows; realization of glacial time versus annihilation of time, and continued slavery to clock time; green culture versus real virtuality. These are the fundamental

<sup>23</sup> Interview in Ostertag (1991: 33).

<sup>24</sup> Kelly (1994: 37).

challenges of the environmental movement to dominant structures of the network society. And this is why it addresses the issues that people perceive vaguely as being the stuff of which their new lives are made. It remains that between this "fierce green fire" and people's hearths, the tenements of society stand tall, forcing environmentalism to a long march through the institutions from which, as with all social movements, it does not emerge unscathed.

### **Environmentalism in Action: Reaching Minds, Taming Capital, Courting the State, Tap-dancing with the Media**

Much of the success of the environmental movement comes from the fact that, more than any other social force, it has been able to best adapt to the conditions of communication and mobilization in the new technological paradigm.<sup>25</sup> Although much of the movement relies on grassroots organizations, environmental action works on the basis of media events. By creating events that call media attention, environmentalists are able to reach a much broader audience than their direct constituency. Furthermore, the constant presence of environmental themes in the media has lent them a legitimacy higher than that of any other cause. Media orientation is obvious in the cases of global environmental activism such as Greenpeace, whose entire logic is geared toward creating events to mobilize public opinion on specific issues in order to put pressure on the powers that be. But it is also the daily staple of environmental struggles at the local level. Local TV news, radio, and newspapers are the voice of environmentalists, to the point that corporations and politicians often complain that it is the media rather than ecologists who are responsible for environmental mobilization. The symbiotic relationship between media and environmentalism stems from several sources. First of all, the non-violent direct action tactics, which permeated the movement from the early 1970s, provided good reporting material, particularly when news requires fresh images. Many environmental activists have imaginatively practiced the traditional French anarchist tactics of *l'action exemplaire*, a spectacular act that strikes minds, provokes debate, and induces mobilization. Self-sacrifice, such as enduring arrests and jail, risking their lives in the ocean, chaining themselves to trees, using their bodies as blocking devices against undesirable construction or evil convoys, disrupting official ceremonies, and so many other direct

<sup>25</sup> See Epstein (1991); Horton (1991); Ostertag (1991); Costain and Costain (1992); Gottlieb (1993); Kanagy et al. (1994).

actions, coupled with self-restraint and manifest non-violence, introduce a witness-bearing attitude that restores trust and enhances ethical values in an age of widespread cynicism. Secondly, the legitimacy of the issues raised by environmentalists, directly connecting to the basic humanistic values cherished by most people, and often distant from partisan politics, provided a good terrain for the media to assume the role of the voice of the people, thus increasing their own legitimacy, and making journalists feel good about it. Furthermore, in local news, the reporting of health hazards or the environmental disruption of people's lives brings home systemic problems in a more powerful way than any traditional ideological discourses. Often, environmentalists themselves feed the media with precious images that say more than a thick report. Thus, American environmental groups have distributed video cameras to grassroots groups around the world, from Connecticut to Amazonia, for them to film explicit violations of environmental laws, then using the technological infrastructure of the group to process, and diffuse, accusatory images.

Environmentalists have also been at the cutting edge of new communication technologies as organizing and mobilizing tools, particularly in the use of the Internet.<sup>26</sup> For instance, a coalition of environmental groups in the United States, Canada, and Chile, formed around Friends of the Earth, the Sierra Club, Greenpeace, Defenders of Wildlife, the Canadian Environmental Law Association, and others, mobilized against approval of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) because of the lack of sufficient environmental protection provisions in it. They used the Internet to coordinate actions and information, and they built a permanent network that draws the battle lines of transnational environmental action in the Americas in the 1990s. World Wide Web sites are becoming rallying points for environmentalists around the world, as with the sites established in 1996 by organizations such as *Conservation International* and *Rainforest Action Network* to defend the cause of indigenous people in tropical forests. *Food First*, a California-based organization, has linked up with a network of environmental groups in developing countries, connecting environmental and poverty issues. Thus, through the Net, it was able to coordinate its action with *Global South*, a Thailand-based organization that provides the environmental perspective from newly industrializing Asia. Through these networks, grassroots groups around the world become suddenly able to act globally, at the level where main problems are created. It seems that a computer-literate elite is emerging as the global, coordinating

<sup>26</sup> Bartz (1996).

core of grassroots environmental action groups around the world, a phenomenon not entirely dissimilar to the role played by artisan printers and journalists at the beginning of the labor movement, orienting, through information to which they had access, the illiterate masses that formed the working class of early industrialization.

Environmentalism is not merely a consciousness-raising movement. Since its beginnings, it has focused on making a difference in legislation and governance. Indeed, the core of environmental organizations (such as the so-called Group of Ten in the United States) gears its efforts to lobby for legislation, and to support, or oppose, political candidates on the basis of their stand on certain issues. Even non-traditional, action-oriented organizations, such as Greenpeace, have increasingly shifted their focus to put pressure on governments, and on international institutions, to obtain laws, decisions, and implementation of decisions on specific issues. Similarly, at the local and regional level, environmentalists have campaigned for new forms of city and regional planning, for public health measures, for control of excessive development. It is this pragmatism, this issue-oriented attitude, that has given environmentalism an edge over traditional politics: people feel that they can make a difference right now and here, without mediation or delay. There is no distinction between means and goals.

In some countries, particularly in Europe, environmentalists have entered political competition, running candidates for office, with mixed success.<sup>27</sup> Evidence shows that green parties do much better in local elections, where there is still a direct linkage between the movement and its political representatives. They also perform relatively well in international elections, for example, the elections to the European Parliament, because, being an institution that holds only symbolic power, citizens feel comfortable about seeing their principles represented, with little cost in losing influence on decision-making. In national politics, political scientists have shown that chances for green parties are influenced less by people's environmental beliefs than by specific institutional structures framing the opportunities for political competition.<sup>28</sup> In a nutshell, the greater the accessibility of environmental themes and/or protest vote to mainstream parties, the lower the chances for the Greens; the greater the chances for a symbolic vote, without consequences for holding office, the better the performance by Green candidates. Indeed, it seems that Germany was the exception, not the rule, in the

<sup>27</sup> Poguntke (1993); Dalton (1994); Diani (1995); Richardson and Rootes (1995).

<sup>28</sup> Richardson and Rootes (1995).

development of green politics, as I argued above. Overall, it seems that there is a worldwide trend toward the greening of mainstream politics, albeit often in a very pale green, together with the sustained autonomy of the environmental movement. As for the movement itself, its relationship to politics increasingly mixes lobbying, targeted campaigning for or against candidates, and influencing voters through issue-oriented mobilizations. Through these diverse tactics, environmentalism has become a major public opinion force with which parties and candidates have to reckon in many countries. On the other hand, most environmental organizations have become largely institutionalized, that is, they have accepted the need to act in the framework of existing institutions, and within the rules of productivism and a global, market economy. Thus, cooperation with large corporations has become the rule rather than the exception. Corporations often fund a variety of environmental activities, and have become extremely aware of green self-presentation, to the point that environmental themes are now standard images in corporate advertising. But not all is manipulation. Corporations around the world have also been influenced by environmentalism, and have tried to adapt their processes and their products to new legislation, new tastes, and new values, naturally trying to make a profit out of it at the same time. However, because the actual production units in our economy are no longer individual corporations, but transnational networks made up of various components (see volume 1, chapter 3), environmental transgression has been decentralized to small business, and to newly industrializing countries, thus modifying the geography and topology of environmental action in the coming years.

Overall, with the extraordinary growth of environmental consciousness, influence, and organization, the movement has become increasingly diversified, socially and thematically, reaching from the corporate boardrooms to the fringe alleys of counter-cultures, passing through city halls and parliamentary houses. In the process, themes have been distorted, and in some cases manipulated. But this is the mark of any major social movement. Environmentalism is indeed a major social movement of our time, as it reaches out to a variety of social causes under the comprehensive banner of environmental justice.

### **Environmental Justice: Ecologists' New Frontier**

Since the 1960s environmentalism has not been solely concerned with watching birds, saving forests, and cleaning the air. Campaigns against toxic waste dumping, consumers' rights, anti-nuclear protests,

pacifism, feminism, and a number of other issues have merged with the defense of nature to root the movement in a wide landscape of rights and claims. Even counter-cultural trends, such as New Age meditation and neo-paganism, mingled with other components of the environmental movement in the 1970s and 1980s.

In the 1990s, while some major issues, such as peace and anti-nuclear protest, have receded into the background, partly because of the success of protests, partly because of the end of the Cold War, a variety of social issues have come to be a part of an increasingly diversified movement.<sup>29</sup> Poor communities and ethnic minorities have mobilized against being the target of environmental discrimination, submitted more often than the population at large to toxic substances, pollution, health hazards, and degradation of their living quarters. Workers have revolted against the source of occupational injuries, old and new, from chemical poisoning to computer-induced stress. Women's groups have shown that, being more often than not the managers of everyday family life, they are the ones that suffer most directly the consequences of pollution, of deteriorating public facilities, and of uncontrolled development. Homelessness is a major cause of declining quality of urban life. And, throughout the world, poverty has been shown, again and again, to be a cause of environmental degradation, from the burning of forests, to pollution of rivers, lakes, and oceans, to rampaging epidemics. Indeed, in many industrializing countries, particularly in Latin America, environmental groups have blossomed, and have linked up with human rights groups, women's groups, and non-governmental organizations, forming powerful coalitions that go beyond, but do not ignore, institutional politics.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, the concept of environmental justice, as an all-encompassing notion that affirms the use value of life, of all forms of life, against the interests of wealth, power, and technology, is gradually capturing minds and policies, as the environmental movement enters a new stage of development.

At first sight, it would seem to be opportunistic tactics. Given the success and legitimacy of the environmental label, less popular causes wrap themselves in new ideologies to win support and attract attention. And, indeed, some of the conservative, nature groupings of the environmental movement have grown wary of an excessively broad embrace that might take the movement away from its focus. After all, labor unions have fought for occupational health legislation since the onset of industrialization, and poverty is, and was, a major issue in its own right, without having to paint in green its sinister

<sup>29</sup> Gottlieb (1993: 207-320); Szasz (1994); Epstein (1995); Brulle (1996).

<sup>30</sup> Athanasiou (1996); Borja and Castells (1996).

darkness. Yet, what is happening in environmentalism goes beyond tactics. The ecological approach to life, to the economy, and to the institutions of society emphasizes the holistic character of all forms of matter, and of all information processing. Thus, the more we know, the more we sense the possibilities of our technology, and the more we realize the gigantic, dangerous gap between our enhanced productive capacities, and our primitive, unconscious, and ultimately destructive social organization. This is the objective thread that weaves the growing connectedness of social revolts, local and global, defensive and offensive, issue-oriented and value-oriented, emerging in and around the environmental movement. This is not to say that a new international of good-willing, generous citizens has emerged. Yet. As shown in this volume, old and new cleavages of class, gender, ethnicity, religion, and territoriality are at work in dividing and subdividing issues, conflicts, and projects. But this is to say that embryonic connections between grassroots movements and symbol-oriented mobilizations on behalf of environmental justice bear the mark of alternative projects. These projects hint at superseding the exhausted social movements of industrial society, to resume, under historically appropriate forms, the old dialectics between domination and resistance, between *realpolitik* and utopia, between cynicism and hope.