

# The Environmental Movement in Ireland

# The Environmental Movement in Ireland

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Foreword by John Barry

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# Foreword

At the time of writing many of the issues discussed by Liam Leonard in *The Environmental Movement in Ireland* are reflected in the new political realities of the island of Ireland North and South. The Green Party – since December 2006 organised on an all Ireland basis – is in coalition government in the Republic while in the Northern Ireland Assembly elections in March it gained its first elected Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA). These developments clearly indicate a level of popular and political success of the Green Movement and issues of (un)sustainable development, but also open up a new and uncharted area for the movement with high expectations of Greens in Government. Long-standing green issues, particularly around climate change and energy security, have received unprecedented levels of popularisation through almost daily media coverage and documentaries such as former US Vice President Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* and the 'Live Earth' global concerts. Green issues are no longer marginal but increasingly at the heart of mainstream Irish political debate and policymaking, particularly as we look into a 'post-Celtic Tiger' era.

As this book demonstrates, the green movement(s) in Ireland does not have it easy. The green movement on the island of Ireland is one of the weakest in comparison with other European countries whether measured by membership or influence on policy and politics. For example, attitude surveys from the 1980s onwards show that the public in the Republic and Northern Ireland placed environmental concerns consistently below other concerns, especially orthodox economic growth, security and employment, and environmental concerns in both jurisdictions has traditionally been lower than in other EU countries as measured by Euro barometer studies. However, there is evidence that we may be witnessing a 'tipping point' given the success of the Green Party in both parts of the island.

Leonard's book admirably outlines the extent to which one cannot understand the green/environmental movement without understanding the political economy of unsustainable development in both parts of the island and the complex legacies of colonialism and (partial) decolonisation. In particular, his book shows how the pursuit of orthodox economic growth (especially since the 'Celtic Tiger' era via neo-liberal strategies) is the root cause of, inter alia, growing environmental degradation and pollution, a waste crisis, rising levels of social inequality, insecurity and

exclusion and decreasing levels of economic (and energy) security amongst others. *The Environmental Movement in Ireland* sketches the main contours of the underlying causes of unsustainable development on the island of Ireland which is one of the main explanatory factors for the rise, composition and success or otherwise of the environmental movement.

On the island of Ireland both the Irish and British state have prioritised an orthodox view of economic growth as the state's main goal (though in Northern Ireland security has long been the state's primary interest until the recent fitful and as yet incomplete 'peace process'), with little consideration or importance attached to environmental protection or sustainable development. Across the island, the environmental costs of 20th-century economic growth are all too obvious, from the excessive use of nitrogen and other fertilisers of industrialised forms of agriculture; the pollution of inland waterways from agricultural, industrial and domestic sources; the loss of biodiversity and habitats; unsustainable increases in carbon dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels; patterns of land use and urban and suburban development which each year decrease green spaces; to the congestion and pollution associated with an explosion of privatised car transport onto a road and transport infrastructure that cannot sustain it and making, for example, Northern Ireland one of the most car-dependent parts of Europe.

However, from a sustainable development point of view there are also other 'non-environmental' costs of state policies and strategies for orthodox 20th-century models of economic growth and wealth creation. The Republic of Ireland is second only to the USA in income inequality according to the 2005 UN Human Development Report with over 15% of its population living in poverty. In both parts of the island, the governance and political structures for sustainable development are marked by less than democratic and accountability processes, which largely reduce and actively discourage citizens to participate in decision-making in policy processes that give structural advantage to market actors, interests and imperatives. While there is lip service to 'joined up thinking' and policymaking in regard to sustainable development, as a policy area it continues to be defined and confined to the 'policy ghetto' of 'the environment' rather than as functioning as an overarching, integrated policy programme for government as a whole. That is, 'sustainable development' is, by and large, interpreted as 'environment' and therefore consigned to the Department of Environment and related agencies and authorities rather than a cross-cutting government objective and one that every department and agency needs to take seriously. In particular, the potential for sustainable development to redefine economic development has yet to be seriously explored on the island, though it is to be hoped with Green Ministers in the Departments of Energy, Environment, and Food and Agriculture, this will change.

Leonard shows that tackling the underlying economic model which is the root cause of ecological degradation and the intensification of inequality and eroding quality of life and work/life balance will force more and more parts of the Irish environmental movement to politicise themselves and make alliances with other social movements and forces to fulfil their objectives – including the labour movement and the community sector. That is, if the environmental movement wishes to

deal with the *causes* of ecological destruction for example, rather than simply dealing with its *effects*, we can expect to see a greater degree of analysis and action around critiquing, challenging and proposing alternatives to the underlying political economy of the island as part of the transition to a more sustainable Ireland. In particular with ‘peak oil’ looming and Ireland both North and South being dependent on this imported, non-renewable energy source, a serious debate around energy security has started in which the transition to a post-carbon economy now pits renewable, clean energy against nuclear power, which environmentalists thought they had defeated in the late 1970s in Ireland. Battles the movement had won now will have to be refought and in much more testing times against a coalition of state and business interests determined to find a technological fix for our energy hungry economy rather than using the energy crisis as an opportunity to plan a transition to a more sustainable and different type of *society*, and different political relations between citizens and state, as opposed to a more resource-efficient *economy* with no changes in our structures of governance and democratic system.

Leonard’s book has staked out a new terrain of Irish politics which others will follow. His book offers an in-depth analysis of the Irish environmental movement and the politics of (un)sustainable development and a mark of its holistic, integrated character is that it will be of interest not simply to academics and students of (post-Celtic Tiger) Irish politics and the Irish environmental movement but to participants in that broad movement itself. It is a fantastic achievement and deserves to be widely read.

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# Preface

Ireland's recent social history has been characterised by a series of environmentally based community challenges to multinational plants in the 1970s and 1980s and disputes about infrastructural projects in the years since the 'Celtic Tiger' boom. These protests can be located in the context of a rural resistance to a technology-driven modernity and its inherent 'risk society' (Beck 1992). This book identifies the community movements which have emerged as part of a growing resistance to accelerated growth as a significant component of environmentalism in Ireland. As green issues increasingly come to the fore, the politics of place has become an important aspect of pluralistic society in an Ireland where scepticism about the grand narratives of mainstream politics abounds in the wake of successive scandals and tribunals.

*The Environmental Movement in Ireland* will examine these themes, by looking at the main categories which have come to define such events: **Environmentalism, Communities** and the most significant incidents of environmental collective action in this country. **Campaigns: Phase One** of these protests took place between the 'No Nukes' protests of the late 1970s and incorporated campaigns against multinationals perceived to be a pollution threat in the years of economic stagnation. **Campaigns: Phase Two** occurred in the years after economic buoyancy was achieved, as the demands of rapid growth threatened communities, the environment and our heritage in the face of major infrastructural projects such as roads, incinerators and gas pipelines. These events will be analysed using social movement theories, including the resource mobilisation, political opportunity, framing of key events.

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**Part I**  
**Politics**

# Chapter 1

## The Environmentalism Debate

### Introduction

In the course of developing his highly significant contribution to ongoing debates about the meanings of ‘environmentalism’, the ecologist and philosopher John Barry posits the question as to whether ‘it would be an exaggeration to proclaim that we are all greens now’ (Barry 1999). However, ecological issues may entail more than the sum of its inherent philosophical debates; contemporary environmentalism can be said to be as much about the interpretation of competing forms of development between state-supported industrial actors and local community movements, both of which compete for control of environmental destinies. Within this contestation, two competing forms of environmentalism have emerged; one based on a growth based form of *ecological modernisation* which has come to be challenged by grass-roots movements inspired by a localised *rural sentiment*. This dichotomy between modernist and populist forms of environmentalism occur within a wider context of ecologically derived debates which incorporate a series of motivations such as anthropological health risks, democratic deficit and political accountability and a range of attitudes towards everything from the role of the European Union to the anti-globalisation movement (Leonard 2006). A growing questioning of aspects of industrialised development and related patterns of consumption that have had a major impact on the environment has led to the rise of ‘green politics’ which have become characterised by localised protests and disputes, but which forms the basis of the modern environmental movement. Nonetheless, the debate about the future of *sustainability* has thrown up some interesting arguments. One of the core issues at the heart of this debate is the extent to which liberal democracies can embrace sustainable development. This acceptance of sustainability as a means of continued ecologically derived development is dependent on an interpretations of sustainability ‘that respect liberal democratic values and institutions’ (Barry & Wissenburg 2001 205). However, the outcomes of these conceptualisations of sustainability must take community values and local sentiments on board in order to be truly ‘sustainable’. In the absence of an agreed understanding between communities, states and industrial interests, attempts to impose ‘sustainable’ initiatives without considering local relationships between communities and their hinterlands risks ongoing campaigns of opposition, something which has occurred in Ireland since the late 1970s (Leonard 2006).

Here, the values which shape ‘anti-authoritarianism and moral scepticism’ (Barry & Wissenburg 2001 207) lie at the heart of liberal pluralistic democracy, as represented by the idealism of those who have over time answered the call of ‘revolution’, ‘movement’ or ‘freedom’ be they republican, socialist, feminist or environmentalist. At the heart of the great intangible of ‘progress’ lies a democratic impulse borne of localised desires for freedom from oppression or degradation through ‘contentious repertoires’ (Tilly 2004) whereby understandings of local sentiments come to be replenished by continued opposition to the destruction of what is significant to a community within the context of the landscape which surrounds it. Concerns about the effects of ecological degradation have increased since the 1960s and environmental social movements have emerged as a result. These movements have challenged concepts of industrialised growth which dominated political thinking over recent centuries. Although environmental groups can network with one another, exchanging expertise and support, the localised focus on environmental grievances may lead to accusations of “NIMBYism”, or the “Not in My Backyard” syndrome. Local groups frame the ‘moral discourse’ (Grove-White 1993) surrounding the environmental and health risks facing communities where toxic plants are situated, and highlight the potential economic and health costs which may result from the distribution of toxic effluents and emissions. These community groups are characterised by intensive outbreaks of local activism, as public responses are galvanised in opposition to hazardous plants. Protests are used to bargain for the restoration or maintenance of collective goods such as clean air or waterways.

Environmental organisations may be dependant on the goodwill of external agencies for other resources, such as financial contributions or favourable media coverage. In order to attract such support, environmental organisations depict themselves in a manner that can exploit the wider sympathies of a public which may be supportive of environmental issues without wishing to become participants in a campaign. In this way, environmental groups may exploit wider public concern for the global commons, given that shared environmental goods such as clean air or food products invoke a degree of concern across society. Accusations of NIMBYism may therefore be overcome, as environmental movements present themselves as responsible protectors of the environment. Movements for environmental change may undergo an ‘ideological development’ (Szasz 1994 77) as increased professionalism, wider networks and political interaction create understandings of how environmental issues overlap at a national or global level. Environmental protests are organised by networks that exploit resources and opportunities. The distinction between ‘old’ and ‘new’ social movements can be located within this understanding of a social movement sector that provides resources and negotiates opportunities and mobilises campaigns. The form of organisational structure employed by environmental movements may vary, ranging from the ‘participatory, anti-hierarchical and anti-institutional...’ on the one hand to ‘formalised, hierarchical and oligarchic organisations on the other’ (Rucht in Klandermans 1989a 63). The variance in environmental movement organisational structures is replicated in the different types of movements that organise challenges against

political and scientific orthodoxy. Rucht (1989) suggests three distinctive types of environmental thinking that shape movement ideology. This thinking is built around the following themes:

- *Conservationism* or the aesthetic, ethical and religious protection of nature. Conservationist methods include respect for the rights of nature, preservation of natural space or parks, and campaigns of aesthetic education.
- *Environmentalism* involves a combination of concerns for quality of human life and of the natural environment. Environmentalism embraces scientific, economic and political arguments about the policies that impact upon lifestyles and the ecosphere.
- *Ecologism* is concerned with a holistic or utopian conception of human existence in harmony with nature. Ecologism prioritises the concerns of nature over human needs, advocating changes to existing lifestyles and political systems which should reflect the primacy of nature (Rucht in Klanderfans 1989a 64, 65).

Various research points to a dichotomy between ecology-centred (ecocentric) and human centred (anthropocentric) types of environmental movement. One aspect of ecocentric thought is concerned with a critique of technology. O’Riordan (1989 9) has identified another dichotomy, between what he refers to as ‘ecocentricism versus techno-centrism.’ Techno-centrism focuses on reforming technology to prevent some aspects of environmental degradation, while an ecocentric focus in contrast advocates the complete reform of socio-political patterns by giving priority to the environment. In this way, politics may be viewed from an environmental perspective. O’Riordan (1989 9) outlines the techno-centric ‘belief in the retention of the status quo in the existing structure of a political power’ associated with middle ranking executives and environmental scientists. These people have ‘faith in the application of science and market forces’ (ibid.) and feel that institutions can adapt to environmental needs. Techno-centric approaches are at the centre of an ‘ecological modernisation’ approach, which sees environmental pragmatism as an efficient part of economic and industrial processes.

Martell (1994) examines the general conditions under which environmental movements emerge. They may have a shared or ‘collective’ interest, and pursue goals which will challenge or change institutions, without operating through the channels of formal party politics. As the institutions of the state fail to deal with the environmental grievances of communities, movements are organised around issues of local concerns. Indeed, due to the state’s primary focus on infrastructural development and competitiveness, state agencies are often the target of environmental movement campaigns. If the political process is seen to be exclusive, and policy that has an ecologically harmful aspect is seen as imposed undemocratically, then movements can form to express alternative or oppositional positions. Scott (1990 145) has provided examples of neo-corporatist government arrangements that exclude environmental concerns from the political agenda. As political parties, industries and trade unions map out their policies, environmental issues may be overlooked. This can lead to environmental movement activism in response to perceptions of democratic deficit on matters of environmental concern, as some



social groups feel left out of the political arrangements based on corporatist relations. The closure on competitiveness by the state and its neo-corporatist partners in Ireland has also led to Irish environmental movements facing political closure. However, this exclusion also creates opportunities for movement challengers.

One result of the wider support enjoyed by environmental movements has been an increase in levels of professionalism and bureaucratic control. As campaigns evolve, so too has the role of movement leadership changed, as the requirement for expertise in areas such as management, media, politics and science has increased. The representation of environmental interests has also become dependent on a group's ability to translate an environmental issue in a manner that attracts the public's attention. State and corporate interests in environmental issues are being represented with a greater degree of sophistication due to public interest in environmental issues, and must be matched by increasingly sophisticated challengers. This may lead to a movement losing touch with more radical groups and could create problems for challengers, as the authorities may exploit internal movement tensions, making movement success more difficult. Local responses to a national or international environmental issue may vary in line with the availability of expertise within movement organisations. Additional factors which environmental movements must contend with include the extent to which control over environmental or development issues is centralised, the competency of the tier of government which must be dealt with, and the manner in which policies which affect local environments or communities are implemented (Van der Heijden 1997; Carmin 2003). As former US Vice President Al Gore's film *An Inconvenient Truth* and *Live Earth* concerts have led to the issue of climate change gaining increased public exposure, the very basis of uneven development, planetary degradation and growth at all costs has come to be challenged. Yet it is the very nature of western society's capitalist growth impulse which is the basis for the extensive global crisis which we are all threatened with.

Does the Liberal notion of humankind's 'natural' rights of freedom allow for the type of environmental destruction currently happening throughout the world? Clearly, deep green and ecocentric grass-roots politics reject this. And as the rise in the politics of environmental protest show, many people have decided to question and reject current development models, in favour of an improved coexistence with the environment. Of course, like other political forms, environmentalism has areas of ideological overlapping in many paradigmatic areas, but the distinction between deep green radicalism and a 'shallow' compromise which tolerates high levels of pollution for profit can be clearly identified. The 'deep green' position, as articulated by Dobson (1990), argues for a 'limit to growth' and understands 'sustainable' to mean no sustainable damage to the earth rather than the 'sustainable pollution' ethic found in the concept of ecological modernisation. As such, deep green politics argues for an ecocentric society, which places an intrinsic value on the environment, above any consideration of profit or structural development.

Robyn Eckersley (1992) first defined the distinction between the ecocentric and anthropocentric spectrums of green politics. By this distinction, Eckersley meant the politics of ethical environmentalism which included 'resource conservation, human welfare ecology, preservationism, animal liberation and eco-centrism'

(Eckersley 1992 34) was separate from the accommodation of 'sustainable' development which placed that development at a higher value than the environment itself. This argument is at the crux of the environmental debate and is central to the definition and public ownership of a shared understanding of what environmentalism is. In the Irish case, these distinctions have been demonstrated in competing environmental paradigms through a presentation of a dualistic eco-sector with:

Two environmental movements in Ireland, one based around established conservation organisations and a developing environmental 'knowledge elite', the other located within populist movements for rural community development. (Tovey 1993)

## Ecopopulism as Deep Green Politics

We can understand this form of rural ecocentricism through an examination of 'rural sentiment' (Leonard 2006). This concept has emerged from an analysis of existing studies of local environmentalism and rural change in the Irish case. Initial accounts of 'rural fundamentalism' (Commons 1986) provided a basis for an understanding of the resistance to state sponsored rural development projects as Irish agriculture became scientised and industrialised in the years after Ireland joined the European Community (EEC) in 1973. Resistance to perceived interference from the state or Europe was derived from a localised sense of mutual dependency and embeddedness within the local hinterlands of rural Ireland. As modernisation and economic growth occurred, a concept of 'rural discourse' was forwarded to describe local responses the location of multinational factories in rural areas (Peace 1997). However, this discourse was in itself a representation of a primordial or visceral 'rural sentiment' (Leonard 2006) which became manifest at times of societal discord in rural Ireland, such as the 'Land Wars' of the late 19th century. Through time, this underlying sentiment becomes a discourse of fundamentalism in the face of external threats to local communities or landscapes which are etched within the subconsciousness or rural dwellers, as part of a 'unifying ether' (Varley and Curtin 1999) which transcends time. When locals invoke the ancient battle cry and song '*the West's Awake*' during episodes of resistance to the degradation of outsiders, it is the landscape, hills and coastline of the west of Ireland that is alive for its inhabitants, in a manner that has parallels with aboriginal tribes globally. This primal response is the basis for understandings of 'rural sentiment', which can be seen as part of what Arne Naess (1972) originally called ecocentricism, the valuing of the hinterland over the self. The dichotomy between deep green and eco-modernist paradigms has its basis in Eckersley's definition of an 'anthropocentric/ecocentric cleavage'. The distinction is made clear from the following quote:

The first approach is characterised by its concern to articulate an eco-political theory that offers new opportunities for human emancipation and fulfilment in an ecologically sustainable society. The second approach pursues the same goals in the context of a broader notion of emancipation that also recognises that moral standing of the non human world. (Eckersley 1992 26)

While both approaches are concerned with the environment, it is the emphasis placed on 'human emancipation' over 'the non human world' which demarcates the anthropocentrism of the sustainable development culture from an ecocentric perspective. Eckersley also cites the 'broadly similar distinctions found in the ecological theories of Naess ('shallow and deep ecology'), O'Riordan ('technocentrism and eco-centrism'), Bookchin ('environmentalism and social ecology') and so on. The positioning of humankind in relation to other species and ecosystems is pivotal in regard to this theoretical contextualisation of two main distinct features of current environmental thought. While not aligned with a traditional understanding of the left/right divide within political ideology, the distinction between anthropocentric and ecocentric does have its basis in humankind's technical and industrial capabilities, which have become the basis for the type of environmental destruction evident in contemporary society. While traditionally the Left pinpointed control of the means of production as the crucial issue of political contestation, environmental politics is more concerned with how the means of production impact upon the environment and to what extent this is acceptable in society. Nonetheless, mainstream political structures have continued to concentrate on the development of society which threatens the environment. Environmentalists have responded to this by addressing the technical nature of industrial development, and the need to critique that development through deep green politics, or alternatively, to try to compromise and regulate industry. A difference has been detected in both aspects of environmental thought in so far as perspectives vary as to whether industrial development should be slowed down, through eco-modernist principles such as 'BATNEEC' or 'the best available technology not entailing excessive costs' or 'The polluter pays principle', or whether industrial growth should be reversed and replaced with a more ecocentric social planning. Pepper (1993) and O'Riordan (1981) have defined such environmental diversions as that of a 'technocentric perspective as opposed to an ecocentric' view:

- *Techno-centrism* recognises environmental problems but believes our current form of society will always solve them and achieve unlimited growth ('the cornucopian view') or more cautiously that by careful economic and environmental management they can be negotiated ('the accommodators').
- *Eco-centrism* views humankind as part of a global ecosystem and subject to ecological laws. These...constrain human action, particularly through imposing limits to economic population growth (Pepper 1993 33, 93).

In other words, the root of techno-centrism lies in social and political compromise between the earth's resources and human development with technology as the cutting edge of this manipulation of the earth's resources. Techno-centric approaches are determined with no overhaul of human social systems envisaged and despite recognition of the inherent ecological problems of this analysis. Eco-centrism, conversely places humankind not to the fore of the global ecosystem, but rather sees humanity as part of an organic whole, with a moral imperative to restrain activity and growth and to interact and cooperate with the greater ecosystems that populate the earth. This view holds a respect for a pristine, natural world

in its own right before any aspect of human economy and development is considered with human beings living in a spirit of cooperation and ecumenism with the environment. The 'deep green' view of environmentalism had its roots in the ecological, feminist and other new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s and has challenged the hierarchical hegemony of political dominance and technological development over social and ecological systems across the globe. Deep green ideology goes beyond old left wing attempts at 'controlling the means of production' or of deconstructing class systems and sets its point of origin before the era of revolution to the beginning of modernity and the age of Enlightenment. By questioning the concept of social order based on expansive development which had its roots in the Enlightenment project present day environmental protests have rejected the concept of a technologically driven modernity in itself, radically moving beyond the position of 'sustainable development' by questioning the validity of development from an ecocentric perspective. Bookchin spells out this premise with a view on these challenges of hierarchical systems of development:

Ecology raises the issue that the very notion of man's dominance of nature stems from man's dominance of man. Feminism reaches even further and reveals that the domination of man by man actually originates in the domination of woman by man. Community movements implicitly assert that in order to replace social domination by self management a new type of civic self ... must be restored ... to challenge the all pervasive state apparatus. (Bookchin 1980 15)

## Risk Society

Andrew Szasz examines the changing reactions to increased environmental problems in society, which he feels are symptomatic of 'a resigned, fatalistic environmentalism' (Szasz 2007 1). This analysis can be linked with the understanding of a poorly planned and toxic existence put forward by Beck in his portrayal of a 'Risk Society'. Essentially, this outlook views the earth in a hazardous light as rampant industrialisation pushes the planet to the brink of a catastrophe caused by a 'bewitchment of reason' (Beck 1996) which holds that in the event of possible global calamity such as nuclear or chemical fallout prevailing attitudes are so transfixed by existing industrialised systems that no real provision has been made for such an event. Furthermore, it seems beyond the genius of current populations to envisage a system of human existence which, at least, doesn't threaten humankind and the planet we inhabit. Yet Beck sees no saviours in the environmental movement, which he claims is trapped in a naturalistic misunderstanding' (Beck 1996 7). He furthers this argument by claiming the ecological movement 'reacts to and acts upon a blend of nature and society that remains uncomprehended, in the name of a nature no longer extant' ... which is held up as 'a model for the reorganisation of an ecological society' (ibid.).

Criticisms of the environmental movement from industrialists are commonplace but Beck's analysis of an overriding confusion as to the positioning of the

paradigms that intersect the bounds of society and environment point to the need for interrogation of the cultural and ideological backdrop to environmental politics. In doing so, this book addresses the varying strands of ecological discourses, by surveying the writers mentioned above, as well as undertaking to analyse recent theoretical conceptualisations in relation to the environment and post-modernity, as well as some of the more diverse examples of environmental consciousness. Beck claims that 'ecological protest is a matter, not of natural but of cultural fact; a phenomenon of cultural sensibility and of the attentiveness of institutions' (Beck 1996 49). This assertion has its basis in the argument which characterises environmental concern as a cultural rather than purely ecological expression. Essentially, the argument highlights the difficulty in explaining the inherent meanings underlying environmental discourses. Political protests, ecological or otherwise, invariably follow from cultural rather than ideological grievances. As western culture has industrialised so too has a new emphasis been placed on protecting an environment once seen as the very impediment of human aspirations for development.

All political ideologies shared at their core a belief in the betterment of humanity through the taming of the ferocity of nature. This is what makes aspects of deep green environmentalism distinctive from the rest of the ideological spectrum. While acknowledging the Left's position on the failure of industrialised capitalism to include large sections of the global population in its wake, deep Ecology goes beyond protesting this as unjust and inequitable and goes on to advocate an overall rejection of human development based on industrialised, technologically driven expansion in favour of cooperation with the still ferocious natural world.

However, theoretical conceptualisation of environmental modernisation which relates to sustainable development of industrial and political processes does not always fit into policy agendas at the EU or national government level. Tensions remain between environmental directives and some policy objectives of economic and structural growth. To achieve some semblance of ecological consciousness many industries hire PR spokespersons that use ecologically friendly language to mask their true intentions. Such rhetoric allows multinationals to sell themselves (and their products) on an environmentally friendly basis and allows a greater threat to the environment to be sold to an unsuspecting public. As a result it is often left to enquiring bodies such as protest groups to oppose multinationals. Many such groups and protestors are portrayed as unreasonable extremists by the public relations mechanism of multinationals. This type of posturing has blurred the definitions which underpin ecological politics. As a result environmental discourses have taken on the dialogue of metaphor and imagery, becoming a part of post-modern representations of the fragmented relations which concern humankind, nature and the building of social networks both globally and locally. As environmental definitions fragment and as the strategies and movements surrounding ecological politics diversify multifarious strands of 'green' political, cultural and social analysis vie with each other in an attempt to engage the public perception of what it is that 'environmental' actually means for them. These ecological discourses become central to the conceptualisations which define the environment. Furthermore, these definitions also challenge the discourses previously set by the parlance and paradigms of industrial society.

Through this discursive contestation of social paradigms, ecological political debate has changed society's vision of itself as well as altering the dynamic of social and political relations, through protest and dialogue, since the last decades of the previous century. This questioning has enabled the growth of new approaches to many aspects of social and ecological relations and in turn has reshaped existing cultural and political discourses while also giving rise to new paradigms of distinct ecological expression. This new expression has come to be known as the 'green movement' or theoretically 'environmentalism'. If western thought contains elements of a dualistic anti-naturalism, then the theoretical conceptualisations stand aside from previous political aspirations in the Western sphere of influence, while fundamentally laying down a challenge to the social constructs which promote an ongoing form of accelerated development.

However, there are two variations of environmental theory which can be used to divide the various elements within ecological thought. One contends that the environment can be 'managed' in conjunction with industrial development. As such this viewpoint, which includes theories such as Ecological Modernisation and Sustainable Development, are in conflict with the 'deep green' school of thought. The 'managerial approach' contends that 'environmental problems ... can be solved without fundamental changes in present values of patterns of production and consumption' (Hovden 1999). One of the central theories which underpin managerial approaches to the environment is 'Ecological Modernisation' (EM).

The development of EM theory has been linked to the publication of the Brundtland Report (WCED 1987) and other events such as the UNCED conference on environment and development (1997). Through these formalised declarations the diverse actions and agencies involved in environmental protection began a process of dialogue concerning the global effects of development on the environment and how agencies can have some input into the environmental issues in their regions. In turn, environmental theorists such as Janicke, Weale and Hajer, began to examine the varying strands of social actors involved in environmental matters; these included multinational companies, national and local governments, social and environmental movements and other NGOs. Through this review of existing environmental paradigms a critical theoretical concept, Ecological Modernisation theory was advanced.

Ecological Modernisation gained a particular momentum in terms of environmental debate and developed various localised aspects in different states. Huber has been credited with the earliest incarnation of EM Theory, which was significant for its emphasis on the technological benefits of this approach, including:

the role of technological innovations in environmental reform ... a critical attitude towards the (bureaucratic) state, a favourable attitude towards the role of the market actors and dynamics in environmental reforms; a systems-theoretical and rather evolutionary perspective with a limited notion of human agency and social struggles; and an orientation towards analyses at the level of the nation state. (Mol & Sonnefeld 2000)

However, debates about Ecological Modernisation theory in the 1990s were redirected towards the cultural and institutional sphere of influence over the environment, through the works of Weale and Hajer, among others. Weale defines 'the new politics

of pollution' with a quote from Commoner, as the process by which affluent societies begin 'making peace with the planet' (Weale 1992 1) and its levels of affluence which vary from country to country. There has also been a dichotomy between the rates at which different states developed pollution controls and environmental policies. New forms of institutions, using sanctions and regulations, have become an integrated part of states' and regions' environmental policy. For instance, EU member states respond to the ongoing environmental directives emanating from Brussels and the regulations behind these directives go on to become that member state's internal environmental law. However, the complexity of the increasing challenges placed on the environment, when added to diverse cultural factors at a localised level, creates a multilateral, problematic response to centralised directives.

Ultimately, many environmental problems were 'unresolved or growing worse' (Weale 1992 23). Increased population trends, with resultant growth in infrastructural and consumption patterns have compounded responses to ecological crises. Among the issues involved in the growing ecological threat outlined by Weale are 'Growth in population, pressure on food supplies, increased use of fertilisers, depletion of ozone, contamination from sewage and waste disposal, oil spillages, nuclear accidents, species extinction and global climate change are among the issues which currently threaten the earth' (Weale 1992 24–25).

While this has seen an increase in environmental concern globally and in eco-policies nationally, a 'sense of policy failure' (Weale 1992 26) remained in relation to ecological matters. This sense of despondency is due, in part, to the difficulty in coordinating a global response to environmental challenges, through existing agencies, when individual states have different levels of economies, industrialisation, environmental values and localised problems. It was also becoming apparent even to the industrial sector that levels of pollution were now beginning to threaten economic development, through costs and fears for market confidence. For political planners 'environmental protection is now a precondition of economic growth' (Weale 1992 32).

An understanding of new political approaches to the environment can be made clearer by examining some of the paradigms which have become part of this process. Among the theoretical concepts which can explain new approaches to pollution are Rational Choice Theory (RCT), systems analysis and what Weale calls 'the idiom of institutions'. Rational Choice Theory is used to examine the background to why pollution occurs and 'why does it take the form that it does' (Weale 1992 39)? 'Market failure' is given as the origin of pollution conflicts in society, with the specific consequences of 'externalities' causing a 'spill over effect' (ibid.). In other words, pollution caused by waste by-products affect many others outside the producer and buyer of the product, indeed the spill over effect often affects nations far away from the point of origin of that product. For instance, toxic waste produced in Europe or North America is often found in Asia and/or Africa, with a trail of corruption to enable such processes to damage local democracies. For Weale, Rational Choice Theory addresses these concerns through the creation of a public demand for environmental protection which 'takes the form of a public good' (Weale 1992 41).

This 'public good' is acted on through 'public choice theory' which examines 'rational agents in the context of collective action' (Weale 1992 42). Among the actors concerned with public choice theory in relation to pollution are politicians, individual citizens and interest groups. Politicians respond to demands from the electorate. Experienced politicians will know that the answer to environmental problems is only to be found in an area of policy acceptable to the electorate. In turn, individual citizens and interest groups grow concerned when the perceived generality of political responses to environmental challenges (formed in response to the perceived desires of the electorate) fail to deal directly with issues. The complexity of such responses, at once interdependent and yet at odds with each other, does much to create the state of chassis which has resulted in a sense of 'policy failure' surrounding environmental issues.

Systems and institutions are also identified as important aspects of collective action on pollution. Systems theorists examine the link between the functions of the state and economy in what is described as a 'system of relationships' which become problematic when the 'imperative of capitalist accumulation' (making profits) 'is in conflict with the imperative of political legitimacy' (meeting the democratic aspirations of its citizens) (Weale 1992 97). This conflict is met by state regulations but in the case of multinationals and the globalisation of industry such regulations are discouraged in favour of capital investment, creating a crisis of legitimacy for the nation state. It is at this point that the role of the environmental movement impinges upon the state, as such movements respond to a perceived lack of activity by the state in aspects of ecological protection. This role is outlined as being that which is concerned with 'what could be saved from and defended against the state...trying to protect a sphere of life against the intervention of the state or state-sanctioned policy' (Offe 1984 189–190).

The third 'idiom of analysis' in relation to ecological modernisation is that of institutions. Institutions are defined as 'systems of rules governing electoral processes, the practices governing the use of resources' (Weale 1992 52). Furthermore, an institution is defined in relation to 'identifiable practices consisting of recognised roles linked by clusters of rules or conventions governing relations among occupants of these roles' (Young 1989 52). A distinction is made in relation to their possession of 'physical locations, offices, personnel, equipment and possession of budgets' (Young 1989 32). Institutions are often cast in the role of 'honest broker' in relation to common sense policy decisions. As such, institutions are used to pass on or retain information which, while crucial to policy processes, holds to an informal non-bureaucratic aspect which is often lost to other, relevant actors in the policy process.

As a result, institutional arrangements tend to exist between policy actors at local and international levels. Ultimately, the disparity in institutional influence shaped by cultural and historical factors, affects the regional outcomes of policy directives not least in relation to environmental matters. This complexity in the procedural apparatus of state and voluntary actors reveals the fragmented nature of the political arena which is charged with pollution controls and environmental protection. It is this very complexity which lends itself to the adoption of policies