1. The contours of anti-environmentalism: an introduction to the Handbook of Anti-Environmentalism

Mark C.J. Stoddart, David Tindall and Riley E. Dunlap

The term ‘anti-environmentalism’ brings many things to mind. As Meyer and Staggenborg note in their classic American Journal of Sociology article, ‘any social movement of potential political significance will generate opposition’ (Meyer and Staggenborg, 1996, p. 1630). When opposition to a movement also takes on social movement organizational forms, tactics, or discursive strategies, we are looking at a countermovement. Along these lines, anti-environmentalism includes grassroots mobilization by workers in extractive industries like forestry or oil who fear for the livelihood impacts of environmental policy and who act in defense of their community and family economic wellbeing (Dunk, 1994; Lewin, 2019; Tindall et al., 2021). It also includes anti-environmental think tanks that produce material promoting skepticism about the seriousness of problems like climate change to promote anti-environmentalism and block policies to ameliorate these problems (Boynton, 2015; Brulle, 2014; Dunlap and Jacques, 2013; McLevey, 2014). Going beyond a focus on countermovements, anti-environmentalism can also be enacted through concerted government programs of rolling back environmental policies or regulations, as seen under Donald Trump’s Republican administration in the United States, or Stephen Harper’s Conservative government in Canada (MacNeil, 2014; Turner and Isenberg, 2018). In these cases, as Fisher and Jorgenson (2019) note, we see that policy shifts towards stronger ‘environmental states’ are neither uni-directional nor inevitable. The progressive environmental policy regimes that emerged across many Western countries since the 1970s can clearly be undone, as is readily apparent in the United States, Canada and Australia. This Handbook considers all these types of anti-environmentalism, which we define as ‘classic anti-environmentalism’.

However, this Handbook adopts a broader scope in its exploration of anti-environmentalism. The purpose of this introductory chapter is to set out the spectrum of anti-environmentalisms. This includes classic forms of anti-environmentalism that are frequently corporate driven and often organized by public relations firms as ‘astroturf’ organizations; that is, corporate-supported movements designed to resemble grassroots movements (Beder, 1998; Brulle and Aronczyk, 2019). However, it also includes what we term ‘critical’ or ‘reflexive’ anti-environmentalisms. The latter forms of anti-environmentalism often stem from critical conversations within and across social movements that tend to be progressive and share the goals of social justice and sustainability to varying degrees. They grow from tensions produced by critical reflections and debates about the unintended or negative impacts of environmentalism within and among these social movements that otherwise share common goals, interests and political orientations. This spectrum of anti-environmentalisms is the conceptual foundation that orients this volume. The remainder of the chapter proceeds as follows: first, we provide a brief overview of the history of environmentalism, as this sets the background.
context for the emergence and development of anti-environmentalism. Second, we provide an overview of classic anti-environmentalism. Third, we introduce the notion of critical or reflexive anti-environmentalism and examine its variations. Finally, we provide a brief overview of the structure of the Handbook.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ENVIRONMENTALISM

Environmental movements can be defined by multiple waves. The first wave is often characterized by the emergence of naturalist and advocacy groups like the Audubon Society and the Sierra Club in the late nineteenth century. First wave environmentalism (often called preservationism) reflected several intersecting influences and anxieties, including the Romantic movement in visual art, which asserted the intrinsic value of rural landscapes, mountains, forests and oceans that had previously been seen largely as threatening, hostile or undeveloped places. Key public intellectuals of first wave environmentalism, such as Henry David Thoreau and John Muir, translated this Romantic interpretation of nature to audiences through their writings. The rapid spread of industrial development in North America provoked an interest in protecting and preserving relatively undisturbed landscapes, especially wilderness areas (Nash, 1967). Many participants in first wave environmentalism were inspired by participation in outdoor recreation activities like hiking, mountaineering, skiing and birdwatching. As such, there was a high level of cross-over between outdoor recreation clubs and advocacy for protected areas (Reichwein, 2014; Schrepfer, 2005).

At the same time, there was another branch of early environmentalism (often called conservationism) led by figures such as Gifford Pinchot that pushed for the wise management of natural resources such as forests to ensure that they would not be depleted and remain available for human use, sometimes leading to conflict with preservationists like Muir (Hays, 1951). Nonetheless, they complemented one another as both opposed the unregulated exploitation and depletion of natural resources. A major legacy of first wave environmentalism was the establishment of a national park system in the United States, an innovation that gradually spread across much of the world. However, first-wave environmentalism gradually faded in visibility, especially in the early days of the Great Depression, while leaving its mark via parks, wilderness areas and the National Park Service, and organizations like the Sierra Club, Audubon Society, National Parks & Conservation Association, and Izaak Walton League (Mertig et al., 2002).

A second, somewhat less notable, wave emerged with the election of US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, whose efforts to deal with the devastating impacts of the 1929–1933 depression and its aftermath included launching federal programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), Soil Conservation Service and Tennessee Valley Authority (Petulla, 1977). The CCC, in particular, employed over three million young, single, jobless men during its existence from 1933 to 1942 to work on a wide range of conservation activities. Among its most notable accomplishments were planting over three billion trees to combat soil erosion and regenerate forest land; building roads, trails, and fire lookouts in federal and state parks; constructing bridges and dams for erosion control; and fighting forest fires. More generally, its efforts contributed to a broader conception of conservation that contributed to the evolution of environmentalism (Maher, 2009).
Following World War II, the US (and then many other nations) gradually experienced growing affluence leading to more leisure time and sparking more interest in outdoor recreation such as visiting state and national parks. Many environmentalists grew concerned about the overuse of public lands as well as their continued exploitation by extractive industries and launched campaigns to expand and protect wilderness and primitive areas and precious sites such as the Grand Canyon. Their campaigns evolved into a full-fledged Wilderness Movement in the 1950s that constituted a third wave of environmentalism (McCloskey, 1972). Its efforts led to passage of the US Wilderness Act in 1964; however, subsequent battles raged over adding many primitive and roadless areas, wildlife refuges, and new parks (e.g., the Redwood National Park) to the National Wilderness Preservation System created by the act, and these kept the Wilderness Movement active and mobilized (Harvey, 1991; McCloskey, 1972).

Campaigns such as the one to establish the Redwood National Park gave the movement and organizations leading these campaigns, such as the Sierra Club and Wilderness Society, a great deal of publicity that helped expand their memberships (Mertig et al., 2002). Some of these traditional organizations began to broaden their focus to environmental degradation writ large as widespread pollution became more obvious (McCloskey, 1972), positioning them to play a significant role in the modern environmental movement that was emerging in the 1960s and constitutes the fourth (and most significant) wave of environmentalism.

In the United States, environmentalism evolved into its contemporary and most notable form as part of the 1960s protest cycle (Boynton, 2015; Dunlap and Mertig, 1992; Mertig et al., 2002; Staggenborg and Ramos, 2016). This protest cycle was spurred by the US civil rights movement and led to the emergence of several spin-off movements including the women’s movement, gay and lesbian rights movements, and Indigenous rights movements, as well as the environmental movement (which also benefited greatly from the contributions of more traditional conservation and wilderness organizations). The growing visibility of ecology as a scientific discipline, as well as the popularity of movement intellectuals and key books like Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring, also played a role in solidifying the new environmental movement (Jamison et al., 1991; Mertig et al., 2002; Walker, 2020). Whereas first wave environmentalism focused primarily on wilderness and establishing protected areas, this fourth and largest wave focused on a broader range of issues including the proliferation of pesticide use, air and water pollution, and nuclear power and weapons testing.

The first Earth Day, held in 1970 with a focus on teach-ins and public education, was a critical event in the timeline of modern environmentalism (Rome, 2013). During this period, not only did several traditional conservation organizations like Sierra Club and National Audubon Society rapidly expand their memberships, but new environmental groups like the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and Friends of the Earth were founded and then quickly grew (Mertig et al., 2002). Of particular significance was the emergence of Greenpeace. Formed in Vancouver, Canada, in 1971 as the Don’t Make a Wave Committee, Greenpeace originated as a protest group against nuclear weapons testing. But in contrast to older groups like the Sierra Club and newer ones like NRDC, Greenpeace was notable for playing to the logic of mass media. With journalists among its founding members, Greenpeace protesters engaged in peaceful but illegal civil disobedience that offered drama and spectacle for environmental news coverage (Corrigall-Brown, 2016; Dauvergne and Neville, 2011; Weyler, 2015).

More radical groups like Greenpeace favored civil disobedience and extra-institutional forms of protest, and other early groups like Environmental Action encouraged various (if rather mild) forms of ‘ecotage’ (Love and Obst, 1972). However, as the 1970s progressed...
there was also increasing institutionalization of the environmental movement, especially in the US where the large national organizations—both traditional ones and recently formed ones—became the dominant force in the movement (Mertig et al., 2002). They concentrated in Washington, DC to pursue policy reform via a range of conventional strategies, including both administrative and congressional lobbying, overseeing policy implementation, litigation, and electoral support for pro-environmental politicians (as exemplified by the League of Conservation Voters). In the process they became highly formalized organizations, relying on professional staffs to pursue their goals as well as manage the organizations and expand their memberships. A key strategy for the latter was direct mail campaigns that built large memberships consisting of individuals who had little if any involvement with the organizations other than paying annual dues and sometimes contributing to specific campaigns—a very weak type of environmental activism to say the least (Fisher, 2006; Mertig et al., 2002).

At the international level, environmentalism was given a major boost by a 1972 United Nations meeting in Stockholm, which led to the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme or UNEP (Caldwell, 1992). Fifteen years later, the UN’s World Commission on Environment and Development (established in 1983 and chaired by former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland) released its report, *Our Common Future*, in 1987. Also known as the Brundtland Report, this volume drew enormous attention around the world and helped mainstream the concept of sustainable development (Macnaghten and Urry, 1998). This version of sustainability promised that economic development and environmental wellbeing could proceed in tandem, provided the needs of future generations were not sacrificed to meet the needs of present generations. This version of sustainability, with its emphasis on balancing the three pillars of economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable development has since come to dominate governmental and corporate environmental discourse (Baker, 2006). However, it has also been criticized as being too abstract, pliable and adaptable to multiple—and often contradictory—political and economic interests (Adkin, 1998; Washington, 2015).

The 1980s and 1990s represented another shift in the evolution of the environmental movement. While well-institutionalized groups continued to dominate the environmental movement with a focus on political engagement in global capital cities, there was also a surge of grassroots (Freudenberg and Steinsapir, 1992) and radical environmentalism through networks like Earth First! (Davis, 1991) that furthered the use of out-of-system protest tactics originally popularized by Greenpeace (Weyler, 2015). Environmental justice movements also emerged through Black community activism in the US, which pointed to racialized disparities in which communities were put at risk of exposure to toxic waste and pollution (Bullard, 1990). Environmental justice movements were particularly important for opening lines of debate within the environmental movement about the costs of institutionalization and social distance from affected communities, as well as the limits of race-blind eco-politics focused on protected areas or endangered species that were far-removed from the experience of many of the communities subjected to environmental harms (Pellow and Brulle, 2005).

The contemporary moment represents yet another version of the modern environmental movement. With the diffusion of social media platforms, we have seen more horizontal and networked forms of environmental movement mobilization and contention, such as Extinction Rebellion (XR), fossil fuel divestment movements, and youth climate strikes, which operate independently from more established and institutionalized environmental organizations (Apfel, 2015; Stuart et al., 2020). At the same time, established and institutionalized groups like the World Wide Fund for Nature or WWF (originally named World Wildlife Fund) continue to
have prominent roles in generating movement-produced research, engaging in the political sphere, or serving as news sources in mainstream television, radio or newspaper coverage of environmental issues (Corrigall-Brown, 2016; Konishi, 2018). Plus, despite the potential for more horizontal forms of communication through social media, institutionalized groups like Greenpeace and WWF also serve as key conduits for environmental protest information to their large groups of followers on social media outlets like Twitter, Facebook or YouTube (Gerhardt et al., 2018; Katz-Kimchi and Manosevitch, 2015). As such, in addition to its worldwide diffusion, contemporary environmentalism is characterized by a diversity of components that include both larger institutionalized groups, which remain relevant as political actors, and more diffuse networks of grassroots protest. It is also characterized by a diversity of tactics, from radical forms of disruptive protest to moderate tactics of lobbying and public education. Finally, contemporary environmentalism is also characterized by a diversity of discursive approaches that range from mainstream sustainable development, to environmental justice, through to radical critiques of the unsustainability of capitalist economies (Caniglia et al., 2015; Dryzek, 1997).

‘CLASSIC’ ANTI-ENVIRONMENTALISM

Much previous research on anti-environmentalism focuses on social movements that mobilize in specific opposition to the environmental movement. These forms of ‘classic’ anti-environmentalism connect conservative or neoliberal political ideologies that emphasize the free market over government regulation with corporate—particularly fossil fuel sector—interests in maintaining profitability in the face of mounting environmental concern (Boynton, 2015; Brulle and Aronczyk, 2019; Walker, 2020).

As Dunlap (Chapter 6) notes in this volume, US anti-environmentalism emerged in the 1970s as a response to the challenges posed by environmentalism to core American values of ‘personal freedom, individual rights ... success, material comfort and progress’. While anti-environmentalist sentiment was expressed by businesses that were targets of the environmental movement, it cohered into a countermovement through the Sagebrush Rebellion and its successor the Wise Use Movement (Brulle and Aronczyk, 2019). The latter—a key example of classic anti-environmentalism—was exemplified early on by forestry workers in the western US, with significant corporate support from the forestry industry, mobilizing in the 1990s against the environmental groups that sought protections for remnant old growth forests and endangered species that relied on those old growth forests for habitat. Their anti-environmentalism linked a form of rural, breadwinner masculinity against an image of environmentalism as an outside force that cared more for trees and spotted owls than for workers and rural communities (Burke, 1995). Particularly in the US, the Wise Use Movement gradually expanded into a widespread effort to open federal land for development and to oppose a wide range of environmental regulations (Brick and Cawley, 1996; Switzer, 1997). The discourse of the Wise Use movement has since been mainstreamed in US political discourse through integration into the Tea Party, as well as through Koch-funded groups like Americans for Prosperity (Brulle and Aronczyk, 2019).

Wise Use also proved influential beyond US borders and inspired the mobilization of SHARE our Resources in British Columbia, Canada. SHARE similarly mobilized forestry communities against environmentalists, adopting a ‘jobs versus environment’ frame that
positioned environmentalists, old growth forests, and wildlife against the economic wellbeing of rural British Columbia (Doyle et al., 1997; Tindall et al., 2021). Tindall et al. (2021) refer to SHARE as a ‘quasi-astroturf group’ because it was created and guided by corporate actors but gained life through the mobilization of local forestry workers and communities. In contrast to other Wise Use campaigns, however, it was less successful at projecting an image of grassroots protest through the media to broader bystander publics. Its affiliations with forestry companies and public relations firms were more apparent to news-workers, which resulted in questions about its legitimacy as a grassroots countermovement (Doyle et al., 1997).

The most prevalent contemporary example of organized anti-environmentalism is the climate change denial or sceptic movement (Brulle, 2014; Dunlap and McCright, 2015). The main thrust of the climate sceptic movement is to undermine efforts to ameliorate climate change by challenging the scientific consensus that climate change is real, human-caused and serious and requires a concerted global policy response and economic transformation (Cook et al., 2016) by promoting uncertainty about climate science. Strategies for doing this include producing research and holding conventions—often with assistance from a handful of contrarian scientists—outside the structures of peer-reviewed climate science, but which gives an aura of scientific credibility to participants’ claims (Boykoff, 2013; Brulle and Aronczyk, 2019; Dunlap and McCright, 2015, Freudenburg and Muselli, 2013; McCright and Dunlap, 2010; Oreskes and Conway, 2011; Young and Coutinho, 2013). The counterclaims of the climate sceptic movement include denial that climate change is occurring at all by challenging the evidential basis of trend data; acknowledging that climate change is occurring but denying that it is human-caused and instead asserting that it is naturally occurring; or acknowledging that climate change is occurring but arguing that it is not serious enough to justify the proposed political or economic interventions to address it. Carroll et al. (2018) describe a newer ‘soft’ form of climate denial that is strategically used by the fossil fuel sector in Canada. As the political and scientific imperatives for climate action become stronger, bolstered by public opinion, fossil fuel companies publicly acknowledge the reality of climate change, while working in the political sphere to manage climate action in ways that protect their profitability.

Like its Wise Use predecessor, the climate sceptic movement draws on corporate resources for support, but also draws on anxieties about environmental protection among segments of the public that rely on fossil fuel intensive economies. Large oil companies like Exxon have been heavily implicated as supporters of the climate change denial machine, which is widely seen as a front for protecting the interests of the fossil fuel sector (Cook et al., 2019; Farrell, 2016a; Rowlands, 2000; Walker, 2020). As Brulle et al. (2020) find, for example, media and political attention to climate change correlates with promotional advertising by fossil fuel companies. Other research has identified the important role of conservative think tanks and countermovement entrepreneurs like the Koch brothers in driving climate scepticism (Brulle, 2014; Boussalis and Coan, 2016; Dunlap and Jacques, 2013; Farrell, 2016b; McLevey, 2014, Walker, 2020), a topic explored in this volume by Doreian and Mrvar (Chapter 12).

Eyerman and Jamison’s (1991) ‘cognitive approach’ to social movements emphasizes the role of key intellectuals and books in the emergence, diffusion and institutionalization of the modern environmental movement through the 1960s and 1970s. This approach highlights that movement intellectuals are essential to shaping the ‘knowledge interests’ that underpin social movement claims-making and strategic action (Jamison et al., 1991). Just as environmentalism has evolved through the influence of key intellectuals and authors, so too does anti-environmentalism work as an intellectual movement as well as a social movement. For
example, Danish political scientist Bjørn Lomborg enjoys media visibility as a self-proclaimed ‘sceptical environmentalist’ who argues that environmental movements exaggerate the severity of environmental problems and that environmental harms are not significant enough to require the costly fixes proposed by environmental advocates (Besley and Shanahan, 2004). In Canada, former Greenpeace activist Patrick Moore developed a second career as public defender of extractive resource sectors against environmentalist demands for new protected areas, or more rigorous regulation and oversight of resource extraction sectors. Well-known Canadian journalist Rex Murphy has similarly been a vocal defender of the Alberta oil sands and voice for climate sceptic claims (Murphy, 2015). Vivian Krause is a journalist and blogger who has found a platform for the frame that environmentalist opposition to the Alberta oil sands is part of a concerted foreign funded campaign to undermine Canada’s oil-based economy, which has found resonance with many Conservative politicians.

Arlie Hochschild’s (2016) recent book *Strangers in their Own Land* takes an ethnographic approach to examining the culture and beliefs of Tea Party Republicans in Louisiana, which typically include climate scepticism and anti-environmentalism. One of her main concerns is the ‘Great Paradox’ that characterizes environmental politics in Louisiana and across the US. That is that red states (that vote Republican) consistently suffer more from industrial pollution, yet also show greater opposition to environmental regulation. For Hochschild, treating the Great Paradox as an example of a public that is duped by corporate interests and actors like the Koch Brothers gives us an incomplete picture. Rather, much of the anti-environmentalism that pervades the American right draws from a shared ‘deep story’ that profoundly distrusts government intervention, trusts in the free market as emblematic of the American Dream, and asserts a defense of Christian faith, family, whiteness, and traditional masculinity against the political and cultural shifts provoked by the social movements of the 1960s protest cycle. The movement–countermovement dynamic thus also relies on the persistence of ‘empathy walls’ that serve as ‘an obstacle to deep understanding of another person, one that can make us feel indifferent or even hostile to those who hold different beliefs’ (Hochschild, 2016, p. 5). Some commentators on Hochschild’s work also raise the question of whether researchers should take such ‘deep stories’ at face value or cast a critical eye on narratives that contain many false assumptions and incorrect facts and may be a form of impression management by participants (Jasper, 2018; McVeigh, 2017; Polletta and Callahan, 2017; Ray, 2017; Shapira, 2017). Still, as Hochschild’s work illustrates, it is important to distinguish corporate-led or ‘astroturf’ forms of anti-environmentalism that protect elite economic interests from the grassroots forms of anti-environmentalism that express anxieties with the livelihood impacts of environmental regulation on families and communities. These forms of anti-environmentalism may work together and complement each other, but it is analytically important to note that they are driven by different political, social and cultural forces.

For example, the tumultuous relationship between environmentalism and resource extractive labor is well studied (Mayer, 2009; Norton, 2003). John Bellamy Foster (1993) takes the conflicts over old growth forestry in the US Pacific Northwest as a starting point. He places much of the blame for the jobs-versus-environment framing of environmental issues at the doorstep of environmental groups that adopt wilderness frames that distance them from forestry workers. One result is that industry-funded anti-environmentalism becomes the de facto ‘voice of the workers’ in a loggers-versus-owls dichotomy (Foster, 1993, p. 13). Similarly, Dunk (1994) draws on interviews with forestry workers in north-western Ontario, Canada, to examine how jobs-versus-environment frames are interpreted. He argues that forestry workers are generally
aware of their paradoxical role in relation to nature, as being simultaneously embedded in nature through their labor while also contributing to its destruction via deforestation. Forestry workers often do not view forestry conflicts through the jobs-versus-environment frame. They are aware of the problems of technological rationalization, shrinking markets, and practices of over-cutting. However, they adopt an oppositional stance towards environmentalists, who are symbolically linked with the urban, the outsider, and with expert knowledge. By contrast, forestry workers define their self-identities through the local, the rural, and common-sense knowledge. In their chapter in this volume (Chapter 4), Tindall, Stoddart and Berseth examine similar issues amongst pro-forestry activists in British Columbia.

Similar social and cultural dynamics are at play in American coal communities. Looking at environmental justice movements in the coal dependent Appalachian region, Bell and Braun (2010) examine the gendered dimension of coal mining identity and environmental resistance. Coal is central to regional identity and dominant forms of masculinity that valorize coal sector employment and reinforce a ‘culture of silence’ around the environmental health impacts of coal mining. By contrast, women are over-represented in environmental justice movements. In part, this is because they can step outside the regional coal mining identity by adopting a motherhood identity, which allows political space to engage in debate about issues like downstream water pollution, air pollution, and the occupational health impacts that harm residents of coal-dependent communities. Lewin (2019) similarly emphasizes the cultural importance of a shared sense of ‘coal heritage’ among Appalachian coal workers to understand their anti-environmentalism. There is a shared valorization of coal labor in the region because it is challenging, relatively well-paid, and makes a significant contribution to the American energy system in a ‘national division of labor’ (Lewin, 2019, p. 52). Conversely, there is a shared sense that the region is looked down upon by many Americans and that their communities will lose out on any transition away from fossil fuels. The communication strategies of coal companies are well aligned with regional values and identity. This reinforces the cultural power of the coal heritage narrative and feeds distrust of environmentalist discourse about just transitions for fossil fuel dependent communities.

Classic forms of anti-environmentalism are generally corporate-driven and organized through conservative think tanks and PR-designed astroturf organizations and campaigns. They connect corporate interests and conservative public intellectuals with segments of the public that share conservative worldviews or who share anxieties about the impacts of environmental policies on extractive sector communities and workers. While organized anti-environmentalism is present across much of the world, it has been most successful at gaining public and political traction in the United States, which serves as the geopolitical center for the movement. Outside the US, anti-environmentalism has become more visible in other Anglo-American countries, such as Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom, where it has often found affiliation with conservative party politics. While several of the chapters in this volume provide a close analysis of this classic form of organized anti-environmentalism, we also broaden the scope to examine what we might call critical or reflexive forms of anti-environmentalism.
CRITICAL/REFLEXIVE ANTI-ENVIRONMENTALISM

In addition to ‘classic anti-environmentalism’, this volume explores other forms of anti-environmentalism that we define as critical or ‘reflexive’ (Davidson, 2012; 2019) forms of anti-environmentalism. These multiple forms of anti-environmentalism highlight perceived problems within the environmental movement and are often raised by those generally sharing political orientations similar to those of environmentalists. In some ways, we might think of critical/reflexive anti-environmentalism as a form of ‘insider opposition’ and productive critique that draws attention to alternative ways of conceptualizing sustainability or doing eco-politics (Agyeman et al., 2003), rather than the outside opposition of classic anti-environmentalism that seeks to obstruct or undermine environmental movement objectives. At the same time, these critical interventions have become subject to debate and critique by environmental scholars, as examined by Kopnina et al. (Chapter 22) in this volume.

A great deal of reflexive anti-environmentalism focuses on the unintended consequences of environmental movements. While the creation of parks and protected areas systems is the major legacy of first wave environmentalism, environmental historians highlight how protected areas entrenched racialized and gendered power dynamics of who was seen to belong in these protected spaces and who was excluded from the ‘commodified wilderness experiences’ they provided (Reichwein, 2014, p. 11). As Schrepfer (2005) notes, first wave environmentalism was born from mountaineering experiences and rooted in recreational interactions with nature. These experiences were often framed as part of a ‘masculine sublime’ where barren, uninhabited mountainous nature was a stage for constructing a particular form of adventurous, risk-seeing masculinity. The creation of parks and protected areas privileged the recreational and touristic use of these spaces by predominantly ‘Anglo, white, urban, middle-class mountaineers’ (Reichwein, 2014, p. 105). By contrast, historical and ongoing Indigenous land use and inhabitation were largely obscured, other than occasional enactments of white ‘playful fantasies’ of ‘playing Indian’ in the wilderness (p. 105).

Critical studies of parks and protected areas have continued to draw attention to the ways in which they have faced resistance by local communities as a form of land enclosure (MacEachern, 2001). Laudati’s (2010) study of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in Uganda, for example, shows that the discourse about the national park as a form of economic development through nature protection and ecotourism failed to translate into benefits for adjacent host communities, but instead created new social inequalities. The creation of the park involved pushing people out of this protected landscape and enclosing forest resources that local communities had depended upon. By contrast, most of the benefits of gorilla ecotourism flowed out of the region to international companies, with only 6 percent of tourism revenues reaching local communities. Nixon similarly examines South African game lodges and protected areas as spaces that stage romanticized ‘encounters with the “timeless” Africa of charismatic megafauna’ (Nixon, 2011, p. 176). For Nixon, this is an example of the ‘slow violence’ of environmental racism that inscribes colonial stereotypes that treat ‘blacks as barbarous poachers whose relationship to wildlife was one of illegality and threat while depending, conversely, on mythologizing whites as stewards of nature whose conservationist principles evidenced a wider civilizational superiority’ (p. 190).

While perhaps harder to read as anti-environmentalism, there have also been tensions and points of conflict within the environmental movement that have led to debates over what constitutes authentic environmentalism. One of the deepest tensions within the movement...
is between deep ecological or eco-centric environmentalisms versus humanist or social justice-oriented environmentalisms (Chodorkoff, 2014; Hay, 2002; Humphrey, 2000; Luke, 1997; Washington et al., 2017). From the former perspective, environmentalism does not align to the traditional left–right political spectrum and should be concerned primarily with ecosystem and species health, with a politics guided by environmental science. For some eco-centric advocates, ecological health must take priority over social development, which leads to support for population control or restrictions on immigration. From the latter perspective, environmentalism aligns with other left-leaning or progressive political issues. This perspective holds that ecological sustainability cannot be achieved without also challenging social power inequalities. In North America, the issue of immigration has been one flashpoint of debate between these different visions of environmentalism, which is explored in this volume by McMullin-Messier (Chapter 18).

Anti-environmentalism may also consist of tensions across different social movements. There have been alliances between environmentalism and Indigenous rights movements during conflicts over forestry practices, oil extraction, and new oil and gas pipelines. However, the tensions that emerge in these relationships are also well documented. As Callison notes, Indigenous groups often face a ‘conundrum’ because they often must ‘demonstrate a special relationship with the land’ to have a voice in the political or media spheres (Callison, 2014, p. 71). However, environmental organization reliance on wilderness frames often sits uneasily with Indigenous relationships with place, in part because they risk erasing Indigenous people from lands they have occupied for thousands of years (Bacon, 2019; Braun, 2002).

For example, Coats (2014) distinguishes the ‘conservationist approach’ of environmental opponents of Alberta oil sands development from the ‘Indigenous rights’ approach taken by Indigenous oil sands opponents. The conservationist approach is rooted in frames centered on risks to habitat and fresh water, as well as linking the oil sands to global climate change. The conservationist approach targets provincial and federal governments and promotes technological and market solutions to climate change and fossil fuel dependency. By contrast, Indigenous Rights approaches begin from an analysis of settler–colonial dynamics, wherein the downstream environmental risks and health impacts are disproportionately borne by Indigenous communities and need to be understood as ‘only the latest in a string of injustices’ that should be addressed as part of efforts to ‘assert Indigenous treaty rights, improve living standards, exercise their right to self-determination, and heal Mother Earth’ (Coats, 2014, p. 271; also see Lameman, 2014; Thomas-Muller, 2014). Tensions between these approaches are exacerbated because environmental groups working from the conservation approach are often better resourced and more influential in public and policy arenas. Furthermore, tensions emerge between the support in principle for Indigenous rights that is shared by many environmental activists and organizations, and the economic development interests of many within Indigenous communities (Vasey, 2014).

Although more scholarly attention has been paid to Indigenous and environmental opposition to oil and gas development, there have also been emerging tensions over renewable energy transitions. For example, in Sámi territories across the Nordic countries, onshore wind energy infrastructure has disrupted Sámi reindeer herding practices. Aili Keskitalo, President of the Sámi Parliament in Norway, argues that when the un-reflexive development of renewable energy places additional burdens on Indigenous communities who must ‘give up our traditional lands and practices to save the world’, this is a new form of colonialism ‘dressed in green finery’ (Keskitalo, 2018).
Another key example of environmentalist–Indigenous conflict is the fallout from environmental campaigns against sealing from the 1970s onwards. As documented in the film *Angry Inuk*, anti-sealing campaigns have alienated Inuit communities from environmental groups and made alliance building difficult because they have undermined Inuit livelihoods and community wellbeing (Arnaquq-Baril, 2016). One response was the adoption of a #sealfie social media campaign by Inuit to reframe anti-sealing campaigns as a form of discrimination and cultural bias (Graugaard, 2018; Rodgers and Scobie, 2015). While Greenpeace abandoned their earlier participation in anti-sealing campaigns, they continue to deal with a legacy of distrust within Inuit and other Indigenous communities because of their association with opposition to sealing. In the Nunavut community of Clyde River, for example, Greenpeace worked with the Clyde River Solidarity Network to support local opponents of seismic activity for offshore gas exploration that would pose risks to local wildlife and hence disrupt Inuit hunting practices. To begin working with the Clyde River community, Greenpeace first issued an apology for the economic and social harms caused by their anti-sealing campaigning. However, some Inuit leaders remain sceptical of the Greenpeace apology, viewing it as a strategic political move in their Save the Arctic campaign, rather than a sincere attempt at decolonizing their environmental politics and ‘following the lead’ of Inuit communities (Rodgers and Ingram, 2019).

Environmental justice movements and scholarship are another important source of critical reflection on the problems of mainstream environmentalism. The environmental justice perspective attends to the ways in which environmental risks and harms are disproportionately and inequitably distributed within and across societies (Agyeman et al., 2003; Čapek, 1993; Guha and Alier, 1997). Key early environmental justice scholarship emerged in the US context and documented that African American and Latinx communities were more likely to be located near hazardous facilities and exposed to toxic pollution, a phenomenon defined as environmental racism (Bullard, 1990). Though some critics suggested that class may be more important than race in accounting for unequal exposure to environmental harms, further research strengthened the case for environmental racism (Mohai et al., 2009). From an environmental justice perspective, the absence of attention to issues of environmental racism and social justice among the large, institutionalized environmental organizations is not simply a blind spot, but represents a wholesale failure to adequately conceptualize sustainability as an eco-political project. By contrast, environmental justice scholars advance the notion of ‘just sustainabilities’, which re-orients environmental policy change to integrate concerns with social justice and inequality (Agyeman et al., 2003).

Other critical interventions into environmentalism have come from within academia. To take an example that has been the subject of contention but continues to be well read in environmental social sciences and humanities, environmental historian William Cronon’s (1995) essay on the ‘trouble with wilderness’ focuses on environmentalism’s preoccupation with saving or protecting ‘wilderness’ places. He argues that the cultural construction of wilderness, rooted in European romanticism and American frontier mythologies, is problematic because it perpetuates nature–culture binaries that are at the core of much of our unsustainable social–ecological relationships. Similarly, Timothy Luke (1997) argues that an eco-politics that privileges the protection of an idealized, uninhabited wilderness has the effect of setting aside special environments and wildlife as nature museums for recreational and touristic visitors. For Luke, this lets the normal, unsustainable operation of consumer capitalism proceed unimpeded outside these protected zones. However, for eco-centric critics, these critiques are
counter-productive because they undermine the ecological importance of large untouched natural areas and the biodiversity and ecological values that they protect.

We also find critics of environmentalism within environmental sociology, where one of the long-standing theoretical debates has been between proponents of Ecological Modernization Theory (EMT) and Treadmill of Production (TOP) Theory. Put briefly, EMT asserts that capitalism has a history of adapting to moments of crisis and the further ecological modernization of capitalism to ensure its sustainability is more viable than pursuing alternatives to capitalism (Fisher and Jorgenson, 2019; Mol et al., 2013). From this perspective, sustainability solutions involve more efficient use of resources, resource substitution, and technological innovation. Ecological modernization is driven by constellations of governments, corporate actors, and environmental movements working in collaboration and conflict. Individual-level environmentalism is also important, both through political consumerism, such as shopping according to environmental values, and ecological citizenship, such as voting for pro-environmental political parties (Spaargaren and Mol, 2008). While EMT generally adopts a positive view of environmentalism as a force for pro-environmental social change, the TOP perspective is suspicious of organized environmentalism.

In contrast to EMT, TOP theory adopts an eco-Marxist perspective that sees capitalism as fundamentally unsustainable because of its core logic of endless growth and the imperative to ensure and increase value for corporate shareholders (Gould et al., 2008; Schnaiberg and Gould, 2000). This Treadmill imperative of endless economic growth is powered by three mutually reinforcing social forces: the interests of corporations in profitability; the interests of workers-citizens in pay checks and consumerist lifestyles; and the interests of governments in maintaining the consent and well-being of both corporations and citizens. According to the TOP, social movement actors have the potential to disrupt the Treadmill by aligning with workers-citizens and challenging corporations and governments. A social movement politics of social-ecological synthesis embraces ecological sustainability goals while also working to reduce social inequality. However, the TOP perspective argues that most mainstream environmentalism engages in a politics of managed scarcity, where governments and corporations are provoked to adopt just enough sustainability to keep the Treadmill running, with little attention to social inequality or injustice. This eco-politics of managed scarcity means that affluent social groups will retain privileged access to environmental goods—clean air and water, healthy food, beautiful recreational environments—and will be able to insulate themselves from the worst effects of environmental decline. Disadvantaged groups, by contrast, will see the amplification of exposure to environmental risks or harms, such as toxic waste, air and water pollution, or climate disasters. From a TOP perspective, most environmentalism feeds a politics of managed scarcity and is oriented around maintaining the institutional legitimacy of environmental organizations. As such, a great deal of environmentalism is either irrelevant or actively harmful (Gould et al., 1993).

OVERVIEW OF THE HANDBOOK

The rest of this Handbook explores the spectrum of anti-environmentalisms as follows. Part II introduces theoretical frameworks for understanding anti-environmentalism. Suzanne Staggenborg and David S. Meyer (Chapter 2) revisit and update their foundational analysis of social movement/countermovement dynamics, with a focus on classic forms of anti-
environmentalism. They argue that a relational approach to movement/countermovement dynamics in the contexts of political opportunities and available resources is essential to better understand how pro-environmental social and political change occurs or is obstructed. Nicholas Scott (Chapter 3) draws on the pragmatic sociology and justification theory of Boltanski and Thévenot to construct a typology of anti-environmentalisms that accounts for the multiple forms of critical/reflexive anti-environmentalism. For Scott, these critical/reflexive countermovements are valuable because they can provoke new forms of environmentalism that are more attuned to questions of justice.

Part III examines the cultural dynamics of anti-environmentalism with a focus on discourse and framing. David Tindall et al. (Chapter 4) examine the forestry-based Share Our Resources (SHARE) countermovement that was active in British Columbia, Canada, at the height of protests over the protection of old growth forests. Drawing on survey data from this peak period of environmental movement and countermovement mobilization, Tindall et al. examine the divergence and surprising convergence of frames used by members of these opposed groups. Petr Ocelík (Chapter 5) examines the discursive strategies used to promote climate scepticism in the media sphere in the Czech Republic. While climate scepticism is most often associated with the US and other anglophone countries, Ocelík’s analysis illuminates how climate sceptic actors have also been successful at gaining media visibility and shaping the climate debate in post-socialist societies.

Part IV turns to issues of anti-environmental values, attitudes and public opinion. First, Riley E. Dunlap (Chapter 6) revisits early work on the environmental movement and its promotion of alternative social values and attitudes. This chapter includes a new preface wherein Dunlap reflects on how the antagonistic relationship between environmentalism and anti-environmentalism continues to shape public opinion, value conflicts and public policy. Kerry Ard et al. (Chapter 7) assess the relative importance of political party affiliation, corporate lobbying, and public opinion on US policy-makers’ pro-environmental and anti-environmental voting patterns, thereby illuminating how public opinion translates (or fails to translate) into the political sphere. While public opinion does effectively influence Democrat policymakers, it has less impact for Republican policymakers, whose voting patterns are more influenced by corporate lobbying. Vanessa Bible (Chapter 8) examines environmental attitudes among resource extraction workers in Australia and argues that it is overly simplistic to define them simply as anti-environmental in their orientations. Anti-environmental attitudes are largely linked to livelihood concerns for extractive industry workers, but these livelihood concerns can be leveraged by corporate and political forces for anti-environmentalism.

Part V shifts focus to social network analyses of anti-environmentalism. Ruth E. McKie (Chapter 9) examines the international diffusion of climate sceptic movements beyond their traditional US base. While there are shared communicative strategies around supporting fossil fuel sectors, using economic development arguments to impede climate action, and emphasizing market-based environmental solutions, McKie also shows that although the climate sceptic movement forms an international network, the communicative strategies of this countermovement are geographically varied. Adam Lucas (Chapter 10) examines Australia’s slow and intermittent trajectory towards climate change action. A network of economic and political elite actors that is well connected within the political sphere has been effective at obstructing Australian climate policy and protecting fossil fuel sector interests against public support for decarbonization and climate action. William K. Carroll et al. (Chapter 11) similarly examine how fossil fuel sector interests have worked through social network connections to articulate
The contours of anti-environmentalism—the Canadian oil sector—as exemplified by the Alberta oil sands—into a form of ‘symbolic nationalism’ that impedes climate policy responses that challenge ongoing fossil fuel extraction. Patrick Doreian and Andrej Mrvar (Chapter 12) use network analysis to identify the central role and disproportionate influence of the Koch Brothers in US anti-environmental movements. Their analysis shows how the Koch influence has diffused into a public and political force for climate scepticism and anti-environmentalism through the US mainstream media and Republican Party.

The subsequent parts of the Handbook examine anti-environmentalism in particular substantive contexts, with Part VI focusing on extractive development and Part VII focusing on agriculture and land use. S. Harris Ali (Chapter 13) examines the discursive strategies used by the Canadian government under Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper to protect the interests of the oil sector from the environmental movement, which was portrayed as an enemy of Canadian economic development. Hayriye Özen (Chapter 14) examines anti-environmental movements that arose in defense of gold mining in Turkey. Özen notes that the movement relied on discursive strategies of deflecting attention from environmental concerns by not directly addressing these concerns, but instead shifting discussion to a nationalistic discourse that portrayed anti-mining activists as a foreign-led attempt to undermine economic development.

The chapters in Part VII mark a distinct shift in the volume from analyses of classic anti-environmentalism to analyses that address critical/reflexive forms of anti-environmentalism. James S. Krueger (Chapter 15) turns to the food sovereignty movement to disturb the environmentalism/anti-environmentalism binary, as this movement has characteristics associated with environmentalism (opposition to industrial agricultural practices), as well as with classic anti-environmentalism (opposition to government intervention and regulation). Martin C. Lukas (Chapter 16) examines conflict between nature protection agencies and Indigenous hunter-gatherer communities around Betung Kerihun National Park in Indonesia and identifies how critical events can provoke local anti-environmental mobilization against parks and protected areas as nature conservation projects. Aleksandra Afanasyeva et al. (Chapter 17) examine opposition to wind power development in rural Alberta, Canada and note that it is inaccurate to characterize this opposition solely as anti-environmentalism. Wind power opponents often share pro-environmental views and call for more socially acceptable forms of renewable energy development.

Part VIII draws attention to the ways in which ethnicity and race complicate our understandings of environmentalism and anti-environmentalism. Pamela McMullin-Messier (Chapter 18) examines how questions of over-population and immigration policy became divisive for the US environmental movement and led to an anti-environmentalism that targeted the ‘greening of hate’ and used environmental discourse to legitimate an anti-immigration political agenda. Ian R. Carrillo (Chapter 19) centers race and racism in our understanding of the social and political dynamics of anti-environmentalism. He argues that race-blind approaches fail to grasp how anti-environmentalism and environmental injustice are bound up with the racial state formations that perpetuate racial inequality.

Part IX examines environmentalism/anti-environmentalism dynamics in the diverse contexts of labor unions, academic institutions and religious settings. Todd E. Vachon (Chapter 20) takes a closer look at the classic ‘jobs versus the environment’ assumptions about anti-environmentalism of US labor movements. Rather than seeing labor-based anti-environmentalism as a reflection of workers’ personal attitudes and interests, Vachon highlights the political
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Economic structures that have made good quality unionized jobs increasingly scarce. In this context, labor movement anti-environmentalism is an understandable response to preserving union jobs, but this also creates situations where union members become the public faces and voices for corporate anti-environmental interests. Victor W.Y. Lam (Chapter 21) looks at the religious sphere, where Christianity has often been implicated as a cultural source of human exceptionalism and anti-environmental values. Lam examines the protest movement against the proposed Trans Mountain pipeline expansion in British Columbia, Canada, which has drawn together activists from Indigenous, religious and environmentalist affiliations. Such protest movements serve as spaces to cultivate ‘reflexive religious anti-environmentalism’ that challenges anti-environmental currents within religious spheres. Helen Kopnina et al. (Chapter 22) turn their gaze on academia. They argue that critical strains of research and writing in the environmental sciences, humanities, and social sciences serve as an ‘indirect’ form of anti-environmentalism because academic critiques of environmentalism can undermine the much-needed political efforts of environmental movements and bolster the claims of classic anti-environmentalists.

The final chapter (Chapter 23) highlights some of the main themes of research on anti-environmentalism, and describes some of the different theoretical approaches to this (and related) topics. In this chapter we argue for greater efforts to incorporate syntheses of key analytical concepts from environmental social sciences and social movement studies as a theoretical foundation for ongoing research on the social and political dimensions of anti-environmentalism.

CONCLUSION

In their classic piece on countermovements, Meyer and Staggenborg (1996) set out two overarching research challenges: to understand ‘the conditions under which countermovements emerge in response to movements’ and to analyze ‘the dynamics of movement–countermovement relations once a countermovement has arisen’ (p. 1631). Expanding on this framework, the chapters in this Handbook of Anti-Environmentalism demonstrate that anti-environmentalism is not a monolithic social force but represents a spectrum of interests and objectives. It is often corporate led, ideologically conservative, and obstructionist to pro-environmental social and political change. However, it may also be critical but oriented towards provoking environmental movements to embrace self-reflexivity and more holistic or inclusive ways of working towards sustainability. The conceptual distinction between classic anti-environmentalism and critical/reflexive anti-environmentalism is thus an important contribution of the dialogue generated across the Handbook.

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