
Environmental Conflict and Democracy in Canada



Edited by Laurie E. Adkin

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Dedication

*to Dennis Adkin (1919-2005),
who never stopped fighting for a better world,*

and

*to Olivier, and to all children,
who so much deserve one.*



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Preface

Laurie E. Adkin

The essays in this book bring together political economy and actor-centred analyses to identify the roots and to explain the outcomes of a range of environmental conflicts. The contributors try to understand the failures and successes of environmentalists and other actors in contesting the interpretation of a conflict, bringing about procedural or regulatory reforms, or building alliances. They ask what we may learn from these conflicts regarding the potential for ecological democratization in Canada. This is a new direction for Canadian environmental studies and for citizenship theory. On the one hand, with regard to environmental conflicts, citizenship theory has been underutilized as an interpretive lens. On the other hand, ecological citizenship theory has seldom grounded its arguments in analyses of the discourses and practices of social and political *actors*. This collection seeks to provide such linkages by examining a variety of environmental conflicts *as* democratic struggles with multiple social dimensions.

In Chapter 1, I introduce concepts and arguments in green democratic theory and identify what I take to be some of the contributions and shortcomings of this literature, as well as my reasons for framing environmental issues as “conflicts.” Here, I focus on several arguments, to which I return in Chapter 18, where I draw out the lessons of the case studies for the conceptualization of ecological citizenship. Most importantly, I argue for the need to connect both normative conceptualizations of environmental citizenship and green (deliberative) democratic theory to an understanding of politics that foregrounds power relationships and hegemonic struggle. To begin this task, I pay close attention to patterns in the practices, understandings, and discourses of actors involved in environmental conflicts and ask how these struggles may be (or are being) interrelated and transformed by their articulation to questions about democratic governance and citizenship. Essentially, in case after case – as demonstrated by the studies in this book – we see how environmental conflicts may be (re)interpreted discursively as struggles about the quality of, and conditions for, the meaningful participation by differently

situated groups in societal decision making via political processes and institutions. The environmental struggles of citizens' groups, environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS), First Nations, and many other actors are necessarily also struggles about governance and citizenship; ecological goals cannot be achieved if existing liberal-democratic norms and institutions are not transformed. Ecological sustainability demands justice. In lieu of the pacifying discourse of "sustainable development," counter-hegemonic actors need a theory of ecological change that recognizes the existence of conflict rooted in social injustice and power relationships, and that identifies conditions and resources for overcoming obstacles to change. It is time to set aside the master's tools of "sustainable development" and turn our efforts toward the realization of ecological democracy.

The interpretation of environmental conflicts as having at stake *the meaning of citizenship* – or the democratization of our political, economic, and legal institutions – requires much greater attention than it has received so far. Research needs to address the following questions: How do state-organized consultation processes, monitoring bodies, or opportunities for judicial interventions shape and constrain citizen participation? How do they privilege some interests over others? How do citizens' groups, ENGOS, First Nations, or other actors challenge hegemonic assumptions about societal priorities or about citizenship? What reforms of policy-making processes have these actors proposed? ("Policy" is used in a broad sense here, to refer not only to government legislation or regulations, but also to the absence thereof, to governmental non-decisions or non-interventions, status quo practices or entitlements of the private sector, and developments that alter or secure the boundary between private and public spheres of governance.) What conceptions of citizenship emerge from these struggles?

The authors in this volume employ an eclectic mix of approaches reflecting, among other factors, their disciplinary backgrounds, their ontological perspectives, and the kinds of issues raised by their case studies. Three levels of analysis, however, are considered throughout: the political economy of these conflicts, their institutional contexts, and the discourses of the actors engaged in them (including media and governmental framings of the issues). In addition, Chapters 2, 7, 11, and 13 consider the roles of scientific and other forms of knowledge in environmental conflicts. Overall, the studies in this book present environmental policy as a terrain of complex, ongoing struggles among conflicting interests interacting with structural and institutional frameworks of opportunity and constraint. Choices with regard to discursive strategies – including the formulation of identities and the framing of conflicts – play critical roles in these struggles.

The environmental policy literature in Canada has maintained, for the most part, a separation from work on social movements. Few published studies have conceived of environmental organizations as social movement

actors or have examined the relationships among the actors involved in efforts to determine policy outcomes. This book aims to help fill this void by examining experiences in which linkages between struggles have been attempted or by asking what has prevented such linkages from being developed. The chapters examine different “interfaces” between “environmentalists” and other actors or identities. Two chapters investigate the difficult relationships between environmentalists and farmers in the contexts of the regulation of genetically modified crops (Chapter 2) and intensive livestock production (Chapter 3). Chapter 13 highlights the leadership of women in opposing a high-risk landfill, while noting their relative isolation (the divisions within their community, their treatment as “non-experts” and as “emotional” women, their limited financial means to pursue litigation, the apparent absence of involvement by ENGOs). Chapter 10 describes a case in which a divided environmental movement and local “anti-protectionist” sentiments weakened the resistance to the privatization of many of Newfoundland’s parks. Chapter 17, on the other hand, reports on a case in which ENGOs successfully linked larger ecological themes and alternatives to exurban citizens’ concerns about urban sprawl. Chapter 12 discusses the forces preventing universities from assuming “institutional citizenship” and leadership in relation to the realization of sustainable communities. Chapters 6, 8, 9, and 15 focus on relations between environmentalists and First Nations. Chapter 5 examines the developing relationships between non-Native fishing communities and First Nations in southwest Nova Scotia. These contributions constitute a rich new source of empirical and theoretical work on the understudied relationships between environmental and First Nations’ struggles.

Many of the chapters in this book identify the forms taken by struggles for environmental justice in Canadian contexts – an area of research that is only beginning to be developed in this country. In addition to Chapter 13’s study of Crane Mountain Landfill and Chapter 16’s discussion of brownfield “instant gentrification” in Toronto, seven chapters provide analyses of cases in which “development” or government policies have imposed disproportionate health risks on First Nations communities and failed to meaningfully involve First Nations in decisions that affect their cultures and livelihoods – indeed, their survival.

Although an effort was made in the selection of chapters (given the research available) to include the broadest possible range of conflicts and to represent varying parts of the country, many environmental issues and geographical areas remain unrepresented in this volume. However, I hope that, despite its gaps and shortcomings, this initial collection will help to forge a new direction in Canadian environmental studies and politics – one that embraces a multidisciplinary, multi-dimensional approach to the understanding of environmental conflicts and seeks to uncover their implications for democratic struggle.

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Environmental Conflict and Democracy in Canada





1

Ecology, Citizenship, Democracy

Laurie E. Adkin

A green democratic theory literature has grown up alongside one that differentiates between social-democratic and neo-liberal models of citizenship, and that examines the gendered nature of citizenship in differing welfare regimes.¹ With rare exceptions (Christoff 1996; MacGregor 2006), the two do not intersect. In my view, it is time to integrate the ecological, egalitarian, feminist, and social needs dimensions of critical citizenship theory. Such an integration is required if we aim to elaborate a more coherent and comprehensive program of reforms that is consistently aware (or at least attempts to be) of the interrelations among ecological imperatives and social needs, gender and racial equality, international solidarity, and the interests and rights of future generations, as well as those of non-human species. Although I do not claim to accomplish this large task in this chapter, I do hope to give a push to the project.

One common thread among struggles for social justice and ecological reform is the call for the democratization of political institutions and processes of decision making in light of the ways in which these privilege elite interests. This link is recognized by Peter Christoff (1996, 161), who argues that ecological citizenship is an “extension” of social citizenship in the form of demands for environmental welfare. Ecological conceptions of citizenship “extend social welfare discourse to recognize ‘universal’ principles relating to environmental rights and centrally incorporate these in law, culture and politics.”

Notably, green democracy goes further than existing conceptions of social citizenship in seeking to include *human “non-citizens”* (non-citizen residents of a territory, residents of other territories, future generations) in decision making, recognizing the supranational nature of environmental concerns and questions of global justice. Green theorists also extend the idea of democratic representation in another important way, arguing that the interests of *non-human species* deserve moral consideration in political decision making (Eckersley 1992, 2004a; Dryzek 1995a).



The environmental justice movements already embody some of the linkages as well as principles of social and ecological citizenship. These campaigns make clear how the poor (often racialized groups) disproportionately suffer environmental harms. But this movement does not demand only, and negatively, that environmental harms be “equally distributed” among classes and racial groups. It opens the door to the consideration of alternative modes of development that avoid and prevent environmental and social risks. Ecological democracy demands that the model of development eliminate or minimize harms and that alternatives be considered (in the realms of science, technology, investment, policy, and institutional design). It demands, most of all, meaningful citizen participation in societal decision making.

In neo-liberal regimes, the supposed needs of the market – most importantly, “freedom” – have primacy over the “social,” and the divide between public and private is re-entrenched (as we see with the familialization of welfare). Thus, the opportunities for citizens to intervene politically in decisions that constitute *societal* choices are strictly circumscribed. We may join political parties and vote, but the shrinkage of the state’s regulatory role vis-à-vis market forces and the ideological convergence of the traditional parties mean that many questions are excluded from the realm of the political. The conditions for active citizenship are further eroded by the concentration of media ownership (Edge 2007; Winseck 2006) and the underfunding of public broadcasting (see Leys 2001).² These developments empower hegemonic interests to determine the framing of political debates (as we see with regard to the debate over family policy in Canada, where the options are constructed, principally, as the universal breadwinner model or the male breadwinner model but *not* the gender parity model, or, in the climate change debate, where the options are presented as “Kyoto” or “no Kyoto” but not “*beyond* Kyoto”).³

Why, as Robyn Eckersley (2004b, 241) asks, have liberal democratic states proven incapable of resolving ecological problems, choosing instead to “merely displace them over space and time”? First, rarely are there any constitutional obligations to represent the interests of non-citizens (territorially, legally), future generations, or non-human species. Second, “partisan competition places groups and organisations that are well resourced, well organised, and strategically located at a distinct advantage to poorly resourced, poorly organised, and dispersed groups, such as community environmental groups” (Eckersley 1996, 215).

But even more importantly, political and economic institutions in liberal democracies are the product of the articulation of political liberalism (individual freedoms, civil rights, pluralism) to economic liberalism (private-property rights, minimal regulation of markets, atomistic view of human

nature). The primacy of private-property rights, the supposed impartiality and efficiency of market forces, the dependence of governments on private investment for job creation and revenue, the values embedded in the system of national accounting, not to mention the global institutions of neo-liberal governance – all this amounts to the equation of rates of capital investment and profit, or rates of GDP or GNP, with the health of “the economy,” the reified category upon whose “stability” and growth all our fortunes are said to depend. All social and environmental demands are measured against its needs: How might greater spending on health care affect the economy? How will a decline in consumer spending affect the economy? How will stricter environmental regulation affect the economy? What will be the economic costs of reducing greenhouse gases? So long as capitalist economic institutions and neo-liberal state-society relations are off limits to substantial reform, certain zero-sum trade-offs are unavoidable (for example, the argument that the implementation of “polluter pays” rules will result in a contraction in investment and increased unemployment). As Eckersley (*ibid.*, 215) puts it, “The upshot is that the longer-term public interest in environmental protection is systematically traded-off against the more immediate demands of capital and (sometimes) labour. Indeed, it is precisely this process (and expectation) of trade-off that has been inscribed into the state agencies and decision rules which govern environmental decision-making.”⁴

These rules are understood by environmentalists, as well as by other actors. Thus, the current efforts of many international, governmental, or non-governmental organizations charged with promoting sustainable development are aimed at getting business “onside” with targets to reduce various emissions or the consumption of raw materials and energy, to recycle, or to meet new product standards. In regard to greenhouse gases (GHGs), the large body of research and proposals aimed at demonstrating the profitability or minimal costs to business of agreeing to targets reflects the strategic perception that sustainable development must be made acceptable to business interests. This strategy is clearly expressed in the title of one of Stéphane Dion’s (2005b) speeches as environment minister, which was addressed to a business conference: “Cutting Megatonnes of GHGs; Making Megaprofits.” Dion (2005a) repeatedly represented Prime Minister Martin’s Project Green as a vision for “a sustainable, competitive economy, a prosperous Canada.” Ottawa’s April 2005 plan for reducing GHGs – *Moving Forward on Climate Change: A Plan for Honouring Our Kyoto Commitment* – though criticized by the Canadian Council of Chief Executives (CCCE), gave the business coalition virtually everything it wanted, short of renunciation of the protocol targets (CCCE 2002; CAPP 2002).⁵ In this game, as I have argued in connection with Canadian environmental politics in the 1980s (Adkin 1992), large corporate interests ultimately decide the limits of sustainability.

On the other hand, we see resistance everywhere to the numerous negative “externalities” (social and environmental) produced by “free markets.” We also see challenges to neo-liberalism’s view of the good citizen (the self-reliant individual), which equates individual autonomy with independence from the state and fails to recognize relational identities or social solidarities. The involvement of civil society organizations – from small citizens’ groups to large NGOs – in environmental conflicts wedges open discursive space for a reconceptualization of citizenship as participatory, expansive, solidaristic, and ecological. Citizen activists understand that ecological health is a public good and hence a democratic right that can only be enjoyed collectively. As Robyn Eckersley (1996, 227) puts it, social and ecological rights “belong to individuals not only as individuals but also as members of social and ecological communities.” Moreover, ecological health cannot be achieved in isolation from the outcomes of other struggles, as their objectives and conditions for success are intertwined. Gender equity, social justice, anti-racism, anti-colonialism, eco-centrism – all intersect with ecological choices. These interdependencies are what ecologists and other social activists need to recognize and to keep in play in the formulation of programs of reform.

Green Democratic Theory and Hegemonic Politics

In the burgeoning literature on environmental democracy and environmental or ecological citizenship, attention has focused either on *normative principles* or the *procedural prerequisites* for deliberative democracy. The former assesses what should be entailed in the practice of ecological citizenship – in particular, the duties or obligations of citizens – and what values should guide ecological citizenship. The latter attempts to determine which rules would maximize inclusive, uncoerced, and informed citizen participation in decision-making processes. In the following sections, I wish to identify some of the contributions and limitations of these two approaches to the conceptualization of ecological citizenship.⁶ I will start by outlining some of the current uses by political theorists of such terms as “environmental citizenship,” “green citizenship,” and “ecological citizenship.”

Environmental/Ecological Citizenship: The Concepts

Environment Canada’s Freshwater Website (Environment Canada 2008) currently defines environmental citizenship as “a personal commitment to learning more about the environment and to taking responsible environmental action. Environmental citizenship encourages individuals, communities and organizations to think about the environmental rights and responsibilities we all have as residents of planet Earth. Environmental citizenship means caring for the Earth and caring for Canada.” In this definition, citizenship is both a personal commitment and a moral injunction that

prods individuals and organizations to act responsibly. This definition also introduces both rights and responsibilities as aspects of citizenship, although neither these nor their agents are specified.

Dave Horton (2006) identifies two main uses of the term “environmental citizenship”: First, it is an “individualized project,” whose discourse is primarily disciplinary (people need to be made more aware and more responsible for their behaviour); this task may be assisted by state agencies, the education system, or civil society organizations. Second, it refers to the existence of environmental *rights*, primarily through a discourse about social justice. Andrew Dobson (2003) places these uses into different categories: “environmental” and “ecological” citizenship, the first referring to the extension of *rights* to the environmental domain but within a liberal framework, and the second to a “post-cosmopolitan” (non-territorial) focus on *virtues and obligations* (see also Sáiz 2005).

A good deal of green democratic theory focuses on postulating the virtues of ecological citizenship, on ecological citizenship as an ideal set of practices (obligations, duties) or orientations (Barry 1996; Dobson 1996, 2006; Marzall 2005; Mark Smith 2005). John Barry (1999, 231-32) defined “green citizenship” as the practice of *ecological stewardship* and “a responsible mode of acting.” Tim Hayward (2006a) privileges the virtue of “resourcefulness.” For Dobson (2006), the central “virtue” of ecological citizenship is justice, with obligations and entitlements taking the concrete form of equal ecological footprints for the global human population. James Connelly (2006, 66) conceptualizes ecological citizenship as a set of duties and the virtues (such as frugality, care, patience) appropriate to their fulfillment. Like other theorists of ecological citizenship, he emphasizes the importance of rational democratic deliberation to determining what the duties of citizens should be. And, like Dobson, he proposes that not all citizens will bear the same responsibilities, because they are starting from different positions with regard to their ecological footprints.

Tim Hayward (2006a, 2006b) and Alex Latta (2007) point to a significant problem with the construction of ecological citizenship as the practice of reducing one’s ecological footprint in the interest of global justice. Essentially, this creates two categories: the *active* citizens, or agents, of ecological sustainability or justice and the *passive* objects of injustice (those in the global South who have not been able to secure a fair share of the earth’s carrying capacity – Dobson uses the term “ecological space” – due to over-consumption in the global North). Dobson’s (2006) defence that unequal obligations should instead be understood to produce “citizens with obligations” and citizens who are “recipients of justice” has not mollified his critics, for whom the term “demanders of justice” might have been more acceptable. One might very well understand the discourses and practices of environmental justice movements around the world as exemplary of active ecological citizenship.

Like Environment Canada's definition of environmental citizenship, the idea of "stewardship" for the earth bypasses questions of "equity, exclusion, and justice" (Agyeman and Evans 2006, 200). Yet, whereas the stewardship discourse fails to address the crisis of social justice (among groups of humans), the environmental justice discourse focuses exclusively on human-human relationships, leaving out the problem of human relationships with non-human nature.

John Barry (2006, 23-24) has, more recently, differentiated between "environmental citizenship," which is akin to weak environmental reforms aimed at reducing pollution or increasing resource efficiencies and that are acceptable to corporations and imposed by the state, and "sustainability citizenship," which he defines as "a more ambitious, multifaceted, and challenging mode of green citizenship, which focuses on the underlying structural causes of environmental degradation and other infringements of sustainable development such as human rights abuses or social injustice." Here we are moving toward a more expansive view of ecological citizenship, one linked to counter-hegemonic politics. The role of the state and the problem of how to "green" states also come into play in Barry's discussion of state-centred versus civil-society-based approaches to reform. Ultimately, Barry argues, green states will be produced only by informed, radicalized, "green" citizens and their oppositional practices (resistance) – including civil disobedience. Robyn Eckersley (2004b) also underlines the importance of vibrant, active green publics in bringing about future "green states" and (following Hannah Arendt) Mick Smith (2005, 60) argues that active participatory politics that take place in the public sphere – including non-violent direct action – are "absolutely central to any conception of an environmental citizen."

If the existence of vibrant, informed, and mobilized green publics is essential to transforming citizenship rights and to creating green states, the next question is how can the formation and sustenance of such *green publics* be facilitated? (In other words, how do we escape the chicken-and-egg problem of how green citizenship can be enabled in the absence of a green state and how a green state can be created in the absence of green citizens?) Dave Horton (2006, 128) argues that environmental citizenship develops "within the cultural and political spaces of contemporary environmentalism." Interestingly, by studying the conditions that sustain green activist communities, he identifies three conditions needed to promote green citizenship more broadly. These include sites/places for community organizing, meeting, and socializing; time; and "materialities" such as alternatives to cars, meat, and imported foods. "Citizenship," Horton (ibid., 147) suggests, "is less a quality of individuals than of the architecture that produces and reproduces that citizenship." Such conditions may be created by civil society actors and/or

promoted and supported by states.⁷ But if we rely exclusively upon the latter, we are back to our chicken-and-egg problem – how, initially, to create green states.

To Horton's list of conditions for ecological citizenship, Nicholas Nash and Alan Lewis (2006, 176-77) add more participatory democracy and the decentralizing of decision making away from elites. Other theorists (such as Dryzek 2000; Mason 1999; Schlosberg, Shulman, and Zavestoski 2006) see deliberative democratic principles and institutions as the means of obliging various actors to justify their desires or preferences in terms of the general good. For David Schlosberg, Stuart Shulman, and Stephen Zavestoski (2006), "critical environmental citizenship" entails institutional and technological *opportunities* for deliberative democracy (which focuses debates on the public good).

The focus on "virtues" and "obligations" speaks more to a liberal-individualist conception of a society made up of undifferentiated citizens (except with regard to their ecological footprints, in Dobson's case), whereas a focus on "rights" assumes the existence of collective subjects and conflicting *societal* interests. Sherilyn MacGregor (2006) observes the tendency of the "ecological citizenship" theorists to treat the citizen as an undifferentiated subject. She shows, for example, how some of the duties and values (such as care) that (male) environmental citizenship theorists wish to promote mean quite different things for the lives of men and women. In other words, citizens are *gendered* individuals. Of course, they are also differentiated by their class, race, and other positions, and any theorization of citizenship rights and duties needs to be examined along these axes as well.

As noted above, Peter Christoff (1996) gives a central place to *environmental rights* in his definition of environmental citizenship, which he views as an *extension* of social and political rights. Just as social rights underpin social welfare states, he argues, environmental rights will underpin green welfare states. Environmental rights are not viewed, however, as being "neutral" in relation to the conditions of capitalist accumulation – any more than social rights are. Christoff (*ibid.*, 161) believes that demands for environmental welfare "at minimum reshape, and often work against, the requirements of capital reproduction and accumulation." This view is borne out, I argue, by an examination of environmental struggles.

Moving Ecological Citizenship to the Terrain of Counter-Hegemonic Politics

The environmental/ecological citizenship literature has sought to envisage what an ecologically sustainable society would look like, from the point of view of values, behaviours, and responsibilities of individual citizens. To some extent, it has crossed over into the terrain of theorization of the green

state, which asks what the role of *the state* would be, in relation to civil society, in an ecologically sustainable and socially just society, and what kinds of constitutional rules or rights would guide state decision making. However, much of the ecological citizenship literature has had a “top-down” character, with (as MacGregor observes) predominantly white male political theorists pronouncing on “primary virtues” and the like, and paying scant attention to *collective* subjects and their relationships to one another and to ecological reform. As Alex Latta (2007, 378) puts it, “current debates have tended to focus on the challenge of cultivating ‘green’ attitudes and behaviours in individual citizens, leaving questions of democracy and collective action on the sidelines.” Thus, normative political theory provides various visions of ecological citizenship (especially the desirable value orientations or practices of citizens) but not enough in the way of *strategies of political change*. In some cases, these theorists’ conceptions of change seem to amount to persuasion or appeals to individuals to change their “values” – a kind of civilizational view – rather than to a strategy to radicalize and connect real, existing conflicts. As Jason Found and Michael M’Gonigle argue in Chapter 12 on the struggle to steer universities in environmentally sustainable directions, quoting Michel Foucault (1980, 133), “the problem is not ‘changing people’s consciousness’ ... but the political, economic, [and] institutional regime for the production of truth.”

Debates in environmental citizenship theory have too often been conducted in what Ruth Lister (2007) refers to as an “empirical void.” What we need are empirically grounded analyses of the political, economic, and institutional *obstacles to change*, as well as of the *resources for change*. Like Horton, we should be asking what conditions might nurture and sustain vibrant green public spheres on various spatial scales in the context of global capitalism. But we should also be asking how relationships of domination/subordination or privilege/exclusion *among* subordinate social groups come into play in environmental conflicts and how these might be transformed into relationships of solidarity. These questions are important to a project of social and ecological change that understands politics in terms of hegemonic struggles. They are taken up in more detail in the case studies in this volume and in its concluding chapter.

Deliberative Democracy and Hegemonic Politics

The deliberative democracy theorists provide us with an excellent set of criteria by which to evaluate existing policy-making processes (including land-use consultations, environmental impact assessments, and public hearings regarding proposed developments). But their tendencies to assume that the ideal conditions for deliberative decision making will produce consensus outcomes, and to bracket crucial problems of power relationships, provoke skepticism.

Much of the green democratic theory literature follows Jürgen Habermas in focusing on the procedural requirements for deliberative democracy (see Chapters 7 and 11, this volume). In this approach, as summarized by Michael Mason (1999, 8), “Discourse refers to modes of communication between people in which understanding rests upon, or presumes the possibility of, agreement motivated by convincing reasons rather than by any form of coercion or deception.” For John Dryzek (2005, 233), “discursive democracy” refers to procedures and institutions that “involve collective decision-making through authentic democratic discussion, open to all interests, under which political power, money, and strategizing do not determine outcomes.” The discourse principle holds that “only those action norms are valid in which all possibly affected persons could agree as participants in rational discourses” (Habermas 1996, 459, quoted in Mason 1999, 8-9). Thus, the procedures of discursive democracy maximize inclusion of those with interests in the outcomes, neutralize strategic power in favour of communicative reason, and seek consensus decisions (identification of common interests or goods). It is through involvement in such contexts that participants may identify general ecological interests, and their preferences may be changed by “ethical reflection on the good life” (Mason 1999, 50). Naturally, discourse theorists of democracy tend to expect that ecological sustainability would be identified, under these conditions, as a common, generalizable interest – one that shapes moral judgment and thinking about the future.

What I find problematic about the deliberative democracy literature is its tendency to assume that rational consensus (without exclusion) on questions of justice is achievable or that the consensus achievable will be acceptable to all parties. (That is, the points that can be agreed upon may not be sufficient to resolve the conflict to everyone’s satisfaction.) In regard to environmental conflicts, once certain ecological parameters are established as “non-negotiable,” conflict between capitalist accumulation, on the one hand, and societal and ecological interests, on the other, becomes inevitable.⁸ For example, in his account of the experience of British Columbia’s Commission on Resources and Environment (CORE) – a significant deliberative democracy experiment of the mid-1990s – Michael Mason (*ibid.*, 125-26, emphasis added) reported that

From the perspective of environmental preservation groups, the commission itself failed to realize that the competing interests evident in provincial wilderness disputes reflect incommensurable values. In such land-use conflicts, consensus may not necessarily be benign, according to wilderness activists, if it is a requirement blocking the political protection of an ecologically vital public interest – the preservation of natural areas beyond the levels of the protected areas strategy (Western Canada Wilderness Committee 1996; Greater Ecosystem Alliance 1994). For the environmental sector,

legislative enactment of a sustainability act would properly recognize certain ecological parameters as nonnegotiable, countering the economic power of extractive resource-based corporations.

We see that the actors do not agree on the value (necessity) of protecting a particular natural area, and no compromise is possible. For the social movement actors, at stake is the defence of “a physical and/or moral territory” (Offe 1984,189). This is an example of the non-negotiable nature of many social movement demands (remove the missiles, provide reproductive choice for women, stop the arms race, ban forest clear-cutting, or toxic chemical pollution, or land mines).

Certain ethical stances do not lend themselves to “rational” universal agreement but nevertheless call for political decisions. When the deliberative process cannot yield a non-exclusive consensus, the decision is deferred to the state. In the case of CORE, the state rejected the commission’s recommendation for a sustainability act in which legal requirements for certain “ecological parameters” would be respected, ceding, instead, to pressures from the forestry industry.⁹ Mason’s (1999, 125) summary of the outcome is instructive:

Those politicians, fearing the precedent that would have been set by CORE’s recommendations on ongoing public involvement, and swayed by the lobbying of civil servants from the dominant land-use agency – the forest ministry – soon moved to weaken the participatory proposals of the commission. This left unchallenged the development biases within the provincial resource bureaucracy and has so far blocked the advance of environmental capacity-building envisaged by CORE ... The major challenge to the communicative resolution of land-use conflicts in British Columbia remains the absence of a comprehensive sustainability act, including an explicitly legislated public participation process and fundamental changes in the legal mandates governing Crown land-use planning.

Another example of conflict between non-negotiable ethical stances and hegemonic interests is provided by the challenges posed to anthropocentric sustainable development discourse by deep ecology and eco-centrism. At stake are how we, as humans, should live with nature and what moral consideration is due to the needs of other species. There is no purely “rational” way of deciding whether it is just for humans to exploit other species, or to destroy their habitats (even to the point of causing their extinction), or to what extent such harms might be justifiable. Nor can there be only one, universal approach to such questions. Mason (*ibid.*, 39) observes that “the procedural neutrality of liberal democratic institutions leaves it to the citizens to decide which notion of the good life to subscribe to.” In this case, it is

difficult to imagine a non-exclusionary consensus regarding human entitlements – all the more so because parties (species) with obvious interests in the outcomes of deliberation are typically not represented at the table.

Principles of democratic governance – of democracy – cannot really be separated from beliefs regarding the conditions for a good life. Claims regarding the latter give rise to demands or expectations regarding the former. The democratic radicalization of liberal norms in both economic and political spheres is a *condition* for the possibility of achieving ecological and social *needs*, and democratization is understood by citizen activists in these terms (Adkin 1998a).¹⁰ Although there are multiple views of what ecological and social needs are, or of how they should be weighted, I suspect that a broad popular consensus is possible regarding not only their legitimacy, but also the factors that obstruct their realization. The formation of such a consensus, however, implies *exclusion* – the construction of political friends, enemies, and partial allies. Rational argumentation (including in favour of procedural democracy) is, of course, part of this discursive, counter-hegemonic politics, but it cannot be expected to produce consensus in the sense of the dissolution or absence of fundamental conflict.¹¹ In a Gramscian sense, *consensus has a hegemonic nature* involving moral and intellectual leadership, the active construction of consent, and coercion.

Chantal Mouffe argues that power can never be eliminated from rational argumentation, and legitimacy can never be grounded on pure rationality. This is because conflict and power are constitutive of the political. We must relinquish, Mouffe (2000, 100, 101) says, “the ideal of a democratic society as the realization of a perfect harmony or transparency.” In her definition, “‘politics’ ... indicates the ensemble of practices, discourses, and institutions which seek to establish a certain order and organize human coexistence in conditions that are always potentially conflictual.” This conflictual view of social interests, and of politics, stems from a post-Marxist ontology rather than a liberal one.¹² As Mouffe clearly spells out in her later book *On the Political* (2005, 53), the radicalization of democracy “requires the transformation of the existing power structures and the construction of a new hegemony.”

Her “agonistic” model of democracy differs sharply from that of Habermas or Rawls, as she (2000, 101-3) explains in this passage from *The Democratic Paradox*:

The central question for democratic politics ... pace the rationalists, is not how to arrive at a consensus without exclusion, since this would imply the eradication of the political. Politics aims at the creation of unity in a context of conflict and diversity; it is always concerned with the creation of an ‘us’ by the determination of a ‘them.’ The novelty of democratic politics is not the overcoming of this us/them opposition – which is an impossibility – but

the different way in which it is established. The crucial issue is to establish this us/them discrimination in a way that is compatible with pluralist democracy ... An adversary is an enemy, but a legitimate enemy, one with whom we have some common ground because we have a shared adhesion to the ethico-political principles of liberal democracy: liberty and equality. But we disagree concerning the meaning and implementation of those principles, and such a disagreement is not one that could be resolved through deliberation and rational discussion ... I agree with those who affirm that a pluralist democracy demands a certain amount of consensus and that it requires allegiances to the values which constitute its 'ethico-political principles.' But since those ethico-political principles can only exist through many different and conflicting interpretations, such a consensus is bound to be a 'conflictual consensus.'

More recently, drawing on psychoanalytical theory, Mouffe (2005, 28) writes, "The theorists who want to eliminate passions from politics and argue that democratic politics should be understood only in terms of reason, moderation and consensus are showing their lack of understanding of the dynamics of the political. They do not see that democratic politics needs to have a real purchase on people's desires and fantasies and that, instead of opposing interests to sentiments and reason to passions, it should offer forms of identification conducive to democratic practices."

I think we might say, simply, that political discourse needs to have roots in people's lived experiences – it must "speak to" the conflicts that they experience in their daily lives but in a way that shows how these conflicts are more than individual experiences and how they call for collective action. Elsewhere (Adkin 1998a), I have made an argument for the necessity of articulating ecological and social struggles by means not only of democratic discourse, but also by recognizing "real experiences of deprivation and alienation" and identifying the conditions necessary for happiness. We should also remember that people are moved to engage in "politics" (to inform themselves, to participate in discussions or debates, to protest, to organize various kinds of events, to join organizations, and so on) when they feel that something important is at stake and that something can be done, collectively, about it. When there is no sense of societal importance, of urgency (for a group, for nature, for society), or of the possibility of effective action, there is little motivation for involvement.

Thus, it is fair to ask of green democratic theory – as Mouffe does of Habermasian theory more generally – whether its understanding of politics is adequate to the challenges that confront radical ecologists. When, with whom, and on what terms should we seek "consensus"? When is it necessary to differentiate between friends and enemies? What is negotiable? What isn't? If we agree that the construction of an "us" and a "them" is critical

to counter-hegemonic politics, what, then, is the role of deliberative democracy?

One might argue that the normative and deliberative approaches to ecological democracy are *embedded in* counter-hegemonic politics, or, in Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci's (1971) terms, embedded in a *war of position*. Gramsci viewed class struggle as a "war of position" waged in every sphere of society (economic, political, cultural) and at every level of intervention (given that the outcomes of local conflicts are always determined, in some measure, by regional, national, or international developments and alignments of forces). Gramsci sometimes depicted war of position as "trench warfare," in the sense that every inch of ground is hard-fought, and the struggle is both offensive and defensive. Although strategy and leadership are important, the "war" can be won only by the efforts of countless individuals who sacrifice, plan, and work for every advance. The key terrain of this trench warfare is that of ideas and beliefs. The main tasks of the counter-hegemonic forces are to call into question the legitimacy and naturalness of the ruling order and to replace these with a vision and a program of their own. Although we need not follow Gramsci in his reduction of counter-hegemonic struggle to a binary class opposition, we may certainly appreciate the relevance of his trench warfare metaphor for understanding the nature of social movement struggles today.

Gramsci's concept of a "historical bloc" may also be reconceptualized in the contemporary context to refer not only to the efforts of the working class to constitute an ideological and organizational movement capable of shifting a society's ruling norms and path of development. A historical bloc may also be understood in terms of a social movement for ecological democracy that is capable of articulating diverse struggles for equality, freedom, and recognition without erasing their specific origins or meanings. Indeed, the attempts, through war of position, to construct or to hold together an existing historical bloc are the essence of "politics" at any level. Insofar as democratic counter-hegemonic movements can constitute historical blocs, possibilities are opened for democratizing reforms and the strengthening of communicative rationality.

The demands emerging from environmental and social justice struggles create common stakes in a project of democratization. They offer a *connecting thread* among diverse struggles, reinterpreting these as democratic struggles. That is, procedural criticisms and demands for the transformation of liberal democratic institutions *arise from* a plethora of real conflicts around ecological risks and social needs, as these are experienced by differently situated individuals and groups. Procedural democratic forms are also *ends in themselves* because civic self-determination and autonomy may be viewed as integral to a good life. Looked at in this light, these struggles reveal the potential for the formation of a historical bloc with an ecological-democratic identity.

Conceptualizing Ecological Citizenship

I use the term “ecological citizenship” to encompass the democratic, social, and environmental *rights* defended or demanded by social actors, along with the *responsibilities* for the well-being of other humans and other species that have emerged from political-ecological discourse. I further use the term to refer to the *practices* of citizens as they seek to secure or enhance these rights and to act responsibly. These practices, which occur in both the private and the public spheres, are both personal and political. In this sense, I concur with Liette Gilbert and Catherine Phillips’ (2003, 314) assessment that “citizenship should be critically understood not only as rights granted by a government, but also as practices through which the limits of established rights are (re)defined and (re)affirmed ... Citizenship is therefore not only a set of formal rights, but rather is a continual process of construction and constitution.”¹² “Ecological citizenship” is, in effect, a shorthand term for a more complex articulation of ecological concerns to social justice and participatory democracy. I prefer this term to “environmental citizenship,” which, I think, has taken on connotations of a narrower sphere of concerns, as well as a mere moral claim or injunction. Like the term “sustainable development,” “environmental citizenship” is rapidly being co-opted by corporations, business associations, and governments in the ways suggested by John Barry (2006) and Agyeman and Evans (2006).

In my view, the case studies in this book entirely corroborate Gilbert and Phillips’ (2003, 319) view that “the fight for participation in control and/or decision-making ... is clear in environmental rights struggles.” Environmental struggles seek to protect or regain citizenship rights that “have been vulnerable to state and market domination: rights to information, to expression, to culture, to identity and difference (and equality), to self-management, to the city, to nature and to services” (ibid.). We can go further than this: environmental struggles identify ways in which democracy must be *extended* or radicalized. In Chapter 18 of this book, I examine in greater detail some of the “deficits” in citizenship that have been highlighted by environmental struggles in Canada, as well as the democratizing reforms that have been called for by the diverse actors engaged in these conflicts. As I argue, these struggles – countless, varied in their intersections, and waged at multiple spatial scales – may be viewed as the trench warfare of democracy.

Notes

- 1 This is a large literature, but see Janine Brodie (2002), Gøsta Esping-Andersen (1999), Julia S. O’Connor (1996), Diane Sainsbury (1994), and Janet Siltanen (2002).
- 2 To some extent, these developments may be countered by the growing use of the Internet.
- 3 These ideal-type categories – widely used in feminist theorization of welfare states – were introduced by Carole Pateman (1988) and Nancy Fraser (1994). The male breadwinner model refers to social insurance and welfare policies, as well as a wider range of social

policies and employment legislation, that assume that the typical family has a full-time male breadwinner and a full-time female homemaker. The universal breadwinner model attempts to facilitate women's employment in the wage sphere by, for example, providing state subsidies for child care and is for this reason viewed as promoting gender equity. The gender parity model (which doesn't exist anywhere) aims to divide both paid work (public sphere) and unremunerated care and domestic work (private sphere) equally between men and women.

- 4 John Dryzek (1995a, 16), likewise, argues that liberal democratic institutions are not well designed to resolve environmental problems: "Interests may be placated in proportion to their material political influence, and compromises may be achieved across them, but wholesale ecological destruction can still result. Resilience in liberal democracy is inhibited by short time horizons ... and a general addiction to the 'political solvent' of economic growth."
- 5 To oppose ratification of the Kyoto Protocol by the Chrétien government, the CCCE formed a coalition – called the Canadian Coalition for Responsible Environmental Solutions (CCRES) – with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce (CCC) and the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters Association (CME). It appears that the CCCE, CCC, and CME began to organize this coalition in 2001, in response to the federal government's 2000 Action Plan on climate change.
- 6 This is necessarily an outline, rather than a fully developed and comprehensive critique.
- 7 Connelly (2006), among others, argues that states should create the structural conditions for citizens to act ecologically without being coerced to do so.
- 8 The discourse theorists themselves recognize the existence of some rather fundamental obstacles to the realization of the conditions for deliberative democracy. For example, Michael Mason (1999, 99) asks, "How will economic sovereignty be wrested from those powerful vested interests who gain so much from the current asymmetries of social power?" John Dryzek (1995b, 112) argues that "all liberal democracies currently operate in the context of a capitalist market system. Any state operating in the context of such a system is greatly constrained in terms of the kinds of policies it can pursue. Policies that damage business profitability – or are even perceived as likely to damage that profitability – are automatically punished by the recoil of the market."
- 9 The Harcourt NDP government, which initiated CORE, was followed by the NDP government of Glen Clark, which was anti-environmentalist. For a full account of the CORE experience, see the excellent case study in Mason (1999, ch. 3), as well as Chapter 7, this volume.
- 10 By "democratic radicalization of liberal norms," I mean such reforms as the entrenchment of social and environmental rights and their precedence over private property rights, the institutionalization of the precautionary principle, the adoption (where it does not exist) of proportional representation in electoral systems, and the implementation of measures to facilitate meaningful citizen participation in societal decision making.
- 11 Andrew Dobson (1996, 141) argues, in fact, that discursive democracy may be viewed as "a tool for criticizing non-green decisions in actually existing democracies."
- 12 As Mouffe (2005, 54-55) puts it, referring to her work with Ernesto Laclau, "Despite its shortcomings, we see the Marxist tradition as having made an important contribution to our understanding of the dynamics of the capitalist system and its consequences over the ensemble of social relations. This is why, contrary to Beck and Giddens, we acknowledge the crucial role played by economic power in the structuring of an hegemonic order."
- 13 Alex Latta (2007, 388) further elaborates the concept of citizenship as "fundamentally dynamic, a set of institutions and practices that are contested and reshaped by citizen activism."