

The Politics of the Environment

Ideas, Activism, Policy

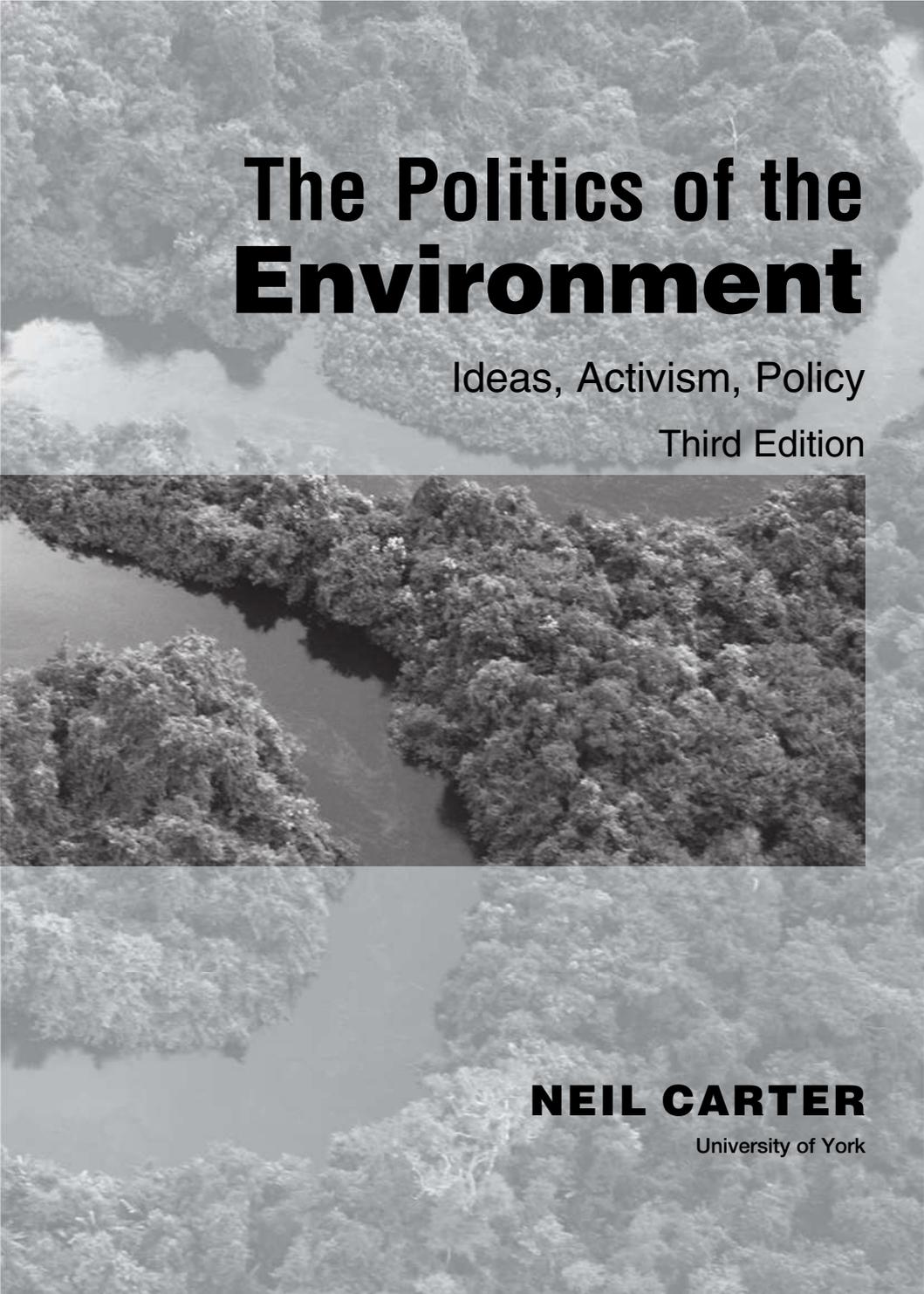
Environmental problems are firmly on the political agenda. The stark threat to the planet from climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution can no longer be ignored by governments, political parties, businesses or individuals.

Responding to the considerable developments of the last decade, Neil Carter has updated his popular textbook thoroughly, while retaining the existing structure of previous editions. *The Politics of the Environment* continues to analyse the relationship between 'green ideas' and other political doctrines, the development of green parties and public policymaking, and environmental issues at international, national and local levels. It provides students with a comprehensive comparative introduction to ideas, activism and policy.

New to this edition are discussions on climate justice, climate legislation and recent environmental struggles, such as demonstrations against fracking. It employs a variety of global examples and includes pedagogical features such as boxes, a glossary and guides to further study.

NEIL CARTER teaches on environmental policy and green politics at the University of York, and has published widely on such areas as the environmental record of the European Parliament, how mainstream parties respond to environmental issues, UK climate policy and the implications of Brexit for the environment. He was a founding member of *Environmental Politics*, and was joint editor of the journal for fourteen years. His article 'Greening the Mainstream: Party Politics and the Environment' won the 2015 American Political Science Association prize for the best paper in science, technology or environmental policy.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-47230-2 — The Politics of the Environment
3rd Edition
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)



The Politics of the Environment

Ideas, Activism, Policy

Third Edition

NEIL CARTER

University of York



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India
79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108472302

DOI: 10.1017/9781108642163

© Neil Carter 2018

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First edition published 2001

Second edition published 2007

Third edition published 2018

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Carter, Neil, 1958– author.

Title: The politics of the environment : ideas, activism, policy / Neil Carter, University of York.

Description: Third edition. | New York : Cambridge University Press, 2018. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018017126 | ISBN 9781108472302 (Hardback : alk. paper) | ISBN 9781108459242 (Paperback : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Green movement. | Environmentalism—Political aspects. | Environmental policy.

Classification: LCC JA75.8 .C38 2018 | DDC 363.7—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2018017126>

ISBN 978-1-108-47230-2 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-45924-2 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

To Charlie, Tom and Rosa

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-47230-2 — The Politics of the Environment
3rd Edition
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> x
<i>List of Tables</i>	xi
<i>List of Boxes</i>	xii
<i>Preface to Third Edition</i>	xiv
<i>Glossary</i>	xvii
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xxi
1 Introduction	1
PART I Theory: Thinking About the Environment	11
2 Environmental Philosophy	13
Staking Out the Territory	14
Holistic Perspectives	19
Moral Extensionism	26
Conclusion: Breaking Down the Anthropocentric–Eco-centric Divide	35
3 Green Political Thought	41
The Central Ideas of Ecologism	42
Traditional Political Ideologies and the Green Challenge	67
Neither Left nor Right But in Front?	77
PART II Parties and Movements: Getting From Here to There	83
4 Green Parties	85
Green Party Electoral Performance: An Overview	86
The Rise of the Greens	90
Explaining Green Party Success	97
The Political Opportunity Structure and Green Party Performance	104

Contents

	The Green Party Family	109
	Contemporary Challenges	113
	Conclusion	114
5	Party Politics and the Environment	117
	Green Parties in Power	118
	The ‘Greening’ of Established Parties	124
	Germany	125
	Britain	128
	The USA	132
	Explaining Party Politicisation	138
	Conclusion	143
6	Environmental Groups	145
	The Environmental Movement: An Audit	146
	A Typology of Environmental Groups	148
	The Institutionalisation of the Environmental Movement	150
	Grassroots Environmentalism	155
	Transnational Environmental Movements	166
	The Impact of the Environmental Movement	170
	Conclusion	175
	PART III Environmental Policy: Achieving a Sustainable Society	177
7	The Environment as a Policy Problem	179
	Core Characteristics of the Environment as a Policy Problem	180
	The Traditional Policy Paradigm	187
	Political Obstacles to Change	188
	Achieving Policy Change	196
	Conclusion	209
8	Sustainable Development, Ecological Modernisation and Green Growth	211
	Sustainable Development	212
	Sustainable Development: Reform or Revolution?	229
	Ecological Modernisation: A Rich-Country Solution?	231
	Green Growth	241
	Conclusion	243
9	Global Environmental Politics	247
	The Paradox of International Co-operation	249
	Environmental Regimes: The Ozone and Climate Change Treaties	251
	Accounting for Regimes	264
	Regime Implementation	269
	Global Environmental Politics and Sustainable Development	273
	Conclusion	276
10	Globalisation, Trade and the Environment	279
	Globalisation and the Environment	280

Contents

International Trade and the Environment	282
The WTO and the Environment	286
North American Free Trade Agreement	289
The European Union	291
Conclusion	298
11 Greening Government	301
Integration	302
Planning	317
Democracy and Participation	323
Conclusion	328
12 Policy Instruments and Implementation	331
Regulation and Regulatory Styles	332
Government Expenditure	339
Voluntary Action	339
Market-Based Instruments	342
Policy Instruments and Climate Change	353
Conclusion	363
13 Conclusion	367
<i>References</i>	375
<i>Index</i>	425

Figures

2.1 What entities have value?	<i>page</i> 19
3.1 The technocentric–ecocentric continuum	79
3.2 Mapping Ecologism	80
5.1 Environmental protection in German party manifestos, 1980–2013	126
5.2 Environmental protection in UK party manifestos, 1983–2015	129
5.3 Environmental voting in US Congress by party, 1971–2016	134

Tables

4.1 Electoral performance of green parties in seventeen countries	<i>page</i> 87
4.2 Green MEPs elected in the European elections, 2014	106
4.3 Expert survey scores for seventeen European green parties (2014)	110
6.1 Budgets and supporters of selected US environmental groups (2016)	147
6.2 A typology of non-partisan political organisations	149
6.3 Types of impact of environmental pressure groups	171
8.1 The ladder of sustainable development: the global focus	218
9.1 Major multilateral environmental treaties	248
9.2 Ozone protection – key developments	252
9.3 Climate change – key developments	256
9.4 Global fossil CO ₂ emissions: top twenty emitting countries	260

Boxes

1.1 Evolution of Environmental Issues	page 5
2.1 Defining Value	15
2.2 The Roots of Anthropocentrism	16
2.3 A Typology of Environmental Philosophy	17
2.4 The Eight-Point Platform of Deep Ecology	20
2.5 Preservationism and Conservationism	27
2.6 The Great Ape Project	30
2.7 Obligations to Future Generations	34
3.1 Survivalism: Leviathan or Oblivion?	43
3.2 Population Growth	44
3.3 The 'Four Pillars' of Green Politics	47
3.4 Degrowth	48
3.5 Greens and Technology	49
3.6 Is Non-Violence a Green Principle?	53
3.7 Climate Justice	63
3.8 Green Citizenship	65
3.9 The Organisation of Denial	68
3.10 The Technocentric–Ecocentric Dimension	78
4.1 Measuring Postmaterialism	94
4.2 The <i>Fundi–Realo</i> Divide	99
4.3 New Zealand Greens: Proportional Representation Makes a Difference	105
5.1 How Mainstream Parties Might Respond to the Environmental Issue	138
5.2 Is the Environment a Valence Issue?	141
6.1 Institutionalisation	150
6.2 Greenpeace 'Saving the Arctic' Campaign – Mixing It Up	154
6.3 The Environmental Justice Movement	159

6.4 Environmental Protest in China	161
6.5 The Repertoire of Environmental Protest	169
6.6 ‘The Big Ask’: FoE’s Campaign for a UK Climate Change Act	172
7.1 The Tragedy of the Commons	182
7.2 Genetically Modified Food Crops and Scientific Uncertainty	184
7.3 The Three Dimensions of Power	190
7.4 Defining Policy Change	196
7.5 Downs’s Issue Attention Cycle	197
7.6 How Networks and Discourses Help Explain the Contrasting Fortunes of the Shale Gas Industry in the USA and the EU	200
8.1 The Brundtland Commission	213
8.2 Global Summits on Sustainable Development	214
8.3 Core Elements of Sustainable Development	216
8.4 Equity and the Elephant	224
8.5 Six Rules for a Precautionary World	228
8.6 Sustainable Development Goals	230
9.1 Environmental Security: A Contested Concept	250
9.2 Regime Terminology	251
9.3 Has the Kyoto Protocol Been a Success?	258
9.4 UN Negotiating Groups at the Paris COP21	263
9.5 The Threat to the Arctic	267
9.6 The Global Environment Facility (GEF)	274
10.1 Does Free Trade Result in ‘Industrial Flight’ to ‘Pollution Havens’?	285
10.2 The European Union: From Traditional Paradigm to Sustainable Development?	292
10.3 The Europeanisation of Environmental Policy?	297
11.1 Forms of Integration	303
11.2 The US Environmental Protection Agency	306
11.3 The UK Climate Change Act	309
11.4 Opposition to Wind Power: Democracy or NIMBYism?	327
12.1 Voluntary Agreements: Success and Failure	341
12.2 Market-Based Instruments	343
12.3 Payments for Ecosystems Services	344
12.4 The EU Emissions Trading System (ETS)	346
12.5 Some Successful Eco-Taxes	350
12.6 Germany’s Energy Transition (<i>Energiewende</i>): Successful Ecological Modernisation?	356
12.7 The Electric Vehicle Revolution in Norway	360

Preface to Third Edition

When I wrote the first edition of this book, published in 2001, the sub-discipline of environmental politics was still battling to establish itself. Only a handful of people were teaching modules on it; today, I think it would be quite unusual (and certainly a sign of weakness) for any political science department not to offer some kind of module in the area of environmental politics and policy. My generation was entirely self-taught in the subject; indeed, the main reason I wrote the book in the first place was to force myself to become knowledgeable about the full breadth of environmental politics, ranging from political theory to parties and movements, public policy and international relations. Not for one moment did I imagine that almost two decades later I would be writing a third edition. I decided to do so, primarily, because so many people kept asking me ‘When is the next edition out?’ Strangely, it was receiving emails out of the blue from people who I had never met asking that question that really persuaded me to do it. They made me think of the tens of thousands of students all around the world who have used my book for their studies – and I hope I have helped encourage some of them to go on to work in the field of environmental protection or advocacy, or just to bring a better awareness of environmental issues into their workplaces and communities. If writing a third edition can keep that small-scale political crusade on track then that would be worth the effort.

Of course, had I known how much work would be involved, I might not have done so, for in the ten years since the second edition so much has happened – the financial and economic crisis; the failure of climate diplomacy at Copenhagen, followed by the success at Paris; the rising influence of China and other emerging nations; the rapid growth of renewable energy; the spread of carbon trading – to name but a few.

Of course, this has also meant that academics have written a huge amount about environmental issues. In short, the book needed extensive revision.

I have kept the chapter structure the same, but I have introduced new material, themes and scholarship throughout the book. All the chapters have been thoroughly updated and refreshed, particularly in Parts 2 and 3. There are several new boxes and tables, and many more have been revised and rewritten.

Chapter 2 now includes discussion of future generations and climate justice, while Chapter 3 locates contemporary threats from climate change and the emergence of the degrowth and transition town movements into extant debates about limits to growth and the sustainable society.

In Part II, the chapter on green parties keeps the theme of new politics to examine their development and electoral performance, but focuses much more on examining what is now an established green-party family. Chapter 5 has been fundamentally rewritten, particularly to bring out a) how UK climate policy benefited from a period of competitive consensus on green issues when the parties were briefly trying to outdo each other; and b) an extensive discussion of the sharp partisan polarisation of environmental issues in the USA, which has had contrasting negative consequences for US environmental policy. Chapter 6 covers recent environment struggles, including protests against fracking and Keystone XL, a successful campaign by Friends of the Earth to secure a climate change act in Britain, and the myriad of transnational climate-change networks, as well as discussing several environmental campaigns in China and the Global South.

In Part III, the nuclear-power case study in Chapter 7 has been rewritten. Chapter 8 considerably revises the discussion of sustainable development and ecological modernisation, while introducing analysis of the green-growth/green-economy discourse and the sustainable development goals. At the heart of Chapter 9 is a completely rewritten and considerably extended account of climate diplomacy. Chapter 10 is refreshed particularly in assessing the development of EU environmental policy. Chapter 11 gives much more attention to climate-policy integration and planning, which seems to have transcended sustainable development as a means of achieving environmental policy integration. Chapter 12 is refreshed with new examples of eco-taxes, analysis of emissions-trading and the emergence of payments for ecosystem services, while the examination of energy and transport policies is completely rewritten to reflect the rapid growth of the renewable energy sector, and the potential for change in road transport if electric vehicles take off. I have revised the conclusion in the light of what has, and has not, changed in the world of environment policy and politics since the second edition.

Again, I am indebted to several friends for reading and commenting on chapters at various stages of gestation: Brian Doherty, Catriona McKinnon, J. P. Skeete, Paul Tobin and particularly Fay Farstad. A long list of colleagues around the world have helped in small ways – sending me articles or

Preface to Third Edition

chapters I couldn't get hold of, making suggestions about issues to cover, or just giving me their support – thank you! I would like to reiterate my gratitude to all those who helped me when writing the first two editions of this book – their positive imprint remains. My colleagues at the University of York, where I work in a wonderful Department of Politics, continue to provide a friendly, supportive and stimulating working environment. Thanks are also owed to several cohorts of students who have taken my modules and whose critical discussion has helped me in formulating my ideas. At Cambridge University Press, John Haslam, Lisa Pinto and Rosie Crawley have been patient, supportive and encouraging throughout the process.

Thanks once more to Charlie. She has, yet again, been an unfailing source of emotional and intellectual support throughout the writing of this book. She has read every chapter, again, and offered excellent, constructive advice. Lastly, thanks to Tom and Rosa for lighting up my life.

Glossary

Anthropocene: the unofficial new geological era (replacing the Holocene) in which human activity is the dominant influence on the environment and climate.

Anthropocentrism: a way of thinking that regards humans as the source of all value and is predominantly concerned with human interests.

Biodiversity: the number, variety and variability of living organisms; sometimes refers to the total variety of life on Earth.

Bioregionalism: an approach that believes that the 'natural' world (specifically, the local bioregion) should determine the political, economic and social life of communities.

Climate change: any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or to human activity.

Conservationism: an approach to land management that emphasises the efficient conservation of natural resources so that they can later be developed for the benefit of society.

Corporatism: a system in which major organised interests (traditionally, capital and labour) work closely together within the formal structures of government to formulate and implement public policies.

Cost–benefit analysis: study that compares the costs and benefits to society of providing a public good.

Decentralisation: the expansion of local autonomy through the transfer of powers and responsibilities away from a national political and administrative body.

Deep ecology: a radical ecocentric moral theory, which has the primary aim of preserving nature from human interference.

Ecocentrism: a mode of thought that regards humans as subject to ecological and systems laws and whose ethical, political and social prescriptions are concerned with both humans and non-humans.

Glossary

Ecological footprint: a measure of the amount of nature it takes to sustain a given population over the course of a year.

Ecological modernisation: a policy strategy which aims to restructure capitalist political economy along more environmentally benign lines based on the assumption that economic growth and environmental protection can be reconciled.

Ecologism: a distinctive green political ideology encompassing those perspectives that hold that a sustainable society requires radical changes in our relationship with the non-human natural world and our mode of economic, social and political life.

Eco-tax: a tax levied on pollution or on the goods whose production generates pollution.

Environmental impact assessment: a systematic non-technical evaluation, based on extensive consultation with affected interests, of the anticipated environmental impact of a proposed development such as a dam or road.

Fracking (or hydraulic fracturing): the high-pressure injection of a water mixture into a borehole that fractures subterranean rocks in order to release shale gas.

Genetically modified organism: new organisms created by human manipulation of genetic information and material.

Green consumerism: the use of environmental and ethical criteria in choosing whether or not to purchase a product or service.

Green growth: economic growth that uses natural resources in an environmentally sustainable manner.

Holism: the view that wholes are more than just the sum of their parts, and that wholes cannot be defined merely as a collection of their basic constituents.

Intrinsic value: the value which something has, independently of anyone finding it valuable.

Issue Attention Cycle: the idea that there is a cycle in which issues attract public attention and move up and down the political agenda.

Limits to growth: the belief that the planet imposes natural limits on economic and population growth.

Market-based instrument: a policy instrument that internalises into the price of a good or product the external costs to the environment of producing and using it.

Modern environmentalism: the emergence, from the late 1960s, of growing public concern about the state of the planet, new political ideas about the environment and a mass political movement.

Moral extensionism: ethical approaches that broaden the 'moral community' to include non-human entities such as animals, based on the possession of some critical property such as sentience.

New politics: the view that since the late 1960s the rise of postmaterial values, a new middle class and new social movements has changed the political agenda and led to a realignment of established party systems.

New social movement: a loose-knit organisation which seeks to influence public policy on an issue such as the environment, nuclear energy or peace, and which may use unconventional forms of political participation, including direct action, to achieve its aims.

Ozone depletion: depletion of ozone in the Earth's upper atmosphere which leaves the surface of the Earth vulnerable to harmful ultraviolet radiation.

Party politicisation: a process whereby the environment ascends the political agenda to become electorally salient and the subject of party competition.

Pioneer states: those countries, mostly in Northern Europe, that have taken the lead in developing progressive environmental policies and setting high standards of environmental protection.

Policy paradigm: a framework of ideas and standards that specifies the nature of a problem and the policy goals and instruments needed to address it.

Political opportunity structure: the dimensions of the political environment that either encourage people to use collective action or discourage them from doing so, and which shape the development of movements and parties.

Postmaterialism: the theory that, as material affluence spreads, 'quality of life' issues and concerns tend to replace material ones, fundamentally changing the political culture and values of industrialised countries.

Precautionary principle: the principle states that the lack of scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation.

Preservationism: an approach based on an attitude of reverence towards nature, especially wilderness, that advocates the protection of a resource from any form of development.

Regime: the principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures which form the basis of co-operation on a particular issue in international relations.

Regulation: any direct ('command-and-control') attempt by the government to influence the behaviour of businesses or citizens by setting environmental standards (e.g. for air quality) enforced via legislation.

Renewable energy: energy sources, such as wind, geothermal and hydroelectric, that never run out.

Resource mobilisation: an approach to collective action which focuses on the way groups mobilise their resources – members, finances, symbols – in turning grievances into political issues.

Risk assessment: an evaluation of the potential harm to human health and the environment from exposure to a particular hazard such as nitrates in drinking water.

Glossary

Sentience: the capacity to suffer or to experience enjoyment or happiness.

Social justice: the principles that should govern the basic structure of a society, focusing on the distribution of rights, opportunities and resources among human beings.

Survivalism: approaches characterised by an overriding preoccupation with human survival, a sense of urgency about an impending ecological crisis and drastic, often authoritarian, solutions.

Sustainable development: the ability of the present generation to meet its needs without undermining the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Technocentrism: a mode of thought which optimistically believes that society can solve all environmental problems, using technology and science, and achieve unlimited material growth.

Traditional policy paradigm: an approach to the environment that treats each problem discretely, gives priority to economic growth and results in reactive, piecemeal and tactical policies and end-of-pipe solutions.

Abbreviations

ACF	Advocacy Coalition Framework	EPA	Environmental Protection Agency (USA)
BSE	Bovine spongiform encephalopathy	EPI	Environmental Policy Integration
CBA	Cost–benefit analysis	EU	European Union
CBDR-RC	Common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities	EV	Electric vehicle
CDU	Christian Democratic Union (Germany)	EU-15	The 15 EU member states pre-2004
CFC	Chlorofluorocarbons	FDP	Free Democratic Party (Germany)
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species	FIT	Feed-in tariff
CLRTAP	Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution	FoE	Friends of the Earth
COP	Conference of the Parties	GEF	Global Environment Facility
CPI	Climate Policy Integration	GHG	Greenhouse Gas
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	GMO	Genetically modified organism
EAP	Environmental Action Plan	HCFC	Hydrochlorofluorocarbons
EEA	European Environment Agency	HEP	Hydroelectric power
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment	HFC	Hydrofluorocarbons
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement	IMF	International Monetary Fund
EJM	Environmental Justice Movement	IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
EM	Ecological modernisation	IWC	International Whaling Commission
EMAS	Eco-Management and Audit Scheme	KXL	Keystone XL pipeline
		LA21	Local Agenda 21
		LULU	Locally unwanted land-use
		MBI	Market-based instrument
		ME	Ministry of the Environment
		MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement

Abbreviations

MEP	Member of the European Parliament	REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation
MP	Member of Parliament	RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (UK)
NAAEC	North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement	SPD	Social Democratic Party (Germany)
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution	SSCS	Sea Shepherd Conservation Society
NGO	Non-governmental organisation	UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
NIMBY	Not in my back yard	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
NSM	New social movement	UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
POPs	Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)	WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
POS	Political opportunity structure	WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature
PPP	'Polluter Pays' Principle	WTO	World Trade Organisation
RE	Renewable energy		