

Week 1 – Lecture 1

Environmental Actors

- different values & positions
- different interests
- assumptions, political opinions
- can be individuals, groups, governments of different sizes, media, scientists etc.

Key Actors

- **Government** (huge number of sub-parts to this)
- **Multilateral bodies** (environmental NGOs such as Greenpeace) took this from a local level to the international stage
- **Civil Society** – WWF (working with farmers to stop them polluting the reef)
- **Business** – initiators and beneficiaries of many projects that could harm the environment

Where do these actors exert influence?

Scale

- Local
- Regional
- Sub-national (state gov)
- National
- Global

Questions to ask

- Limits to growth?
- Obligations to future generations?
- Is technological change sufficient?
- Which political institutions?
- Is capitalism the cause or the solution?
- How does sustainable change occur?

Structure: shapes the way we live, structural factors such as export growth, resource exploitation, institutions taking advantage of decisions made about the environment

Agency = about the ability to change those things that need to be fixed. E.g. how we consume, who we can put in government to make change. Shifts focus away from political leaders to a broader field of action – to the public and communities

Knowing Nature

Great Barrier Reef Case Study

- world's largest reef
- world heritage area = should be preserved and looked after
- but is under pressure
- climate change and pollution = biggest threats

Actors

- President Obama. Spoke at G20 in 2014, in support of protecting the reef

The idea of nature

Has become so normalised and taken for granted that we barely stop to question it's meaning

Week 2 reading considers it as:

- *Part of non-human world.* Forms and changes due to non-human forces
- *Intrinsic nature:* has defining features that are considered intrinsically natural and can't be easily altered through human interaction
- *Superordinate nature:* things that govern a natural area. For e.g. the reef = tides, moon, weather etc.

Human VS Nature

- Humans consider ourselves as organisms to be a part of nature (reproduction , ageing etc.)
- What we think distinguishes us from the natural world is our man-made achievements
 - by extracting resources we exploit nature and through science we understand nature
- We continually objectify nature = hold it as something outside of us as humans. Nature is there waiting for us to enjoy it and catalogue it and explore it
- Scientific data is helping us to see what damage is man-caused and what happens naturally (NASA using special technology in planes to see what harm is from humans in the reef)
- Tourism (promoting the reef as a natural wonder) – becomes an area of aesthetic appreciation
 - makes us appreciate it and it's beauty more
- The reef was originally a dangerous place (to navigate in ships) as well as a site of conflict between traditional owners and settlers
- Gradually it became a place of nurture and beauty, exploration and wonder
- 1920s and 30s onwards, scientists became more and more interested in analysing and protecting it
 - same time oil and gas companies began to think it would be ideal to exploit

Interpretations of the reef have changed over time from terror to awe of its beauty

NATURE=

- **NO FIXED MEANING**
- **ALWAYS CONTESTED**
- **ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICTS OFTEN OCCUR OVER DIFFERENT VIEWS OF NATURE**

Week 2 Lecture 1: Analysing Environmental Politics

Some Critical Questions:

- How do environmental issues rise to the surface?
- How are they dealt with and resolved?
- Why are some the cause of conflict and others seemingly not?
- Why do some result in compromise and consensus?
- Why, in others, do conflicts prevail?
- What factors determine environmental outcomes?

Discourses

= leads into ideologies, narratives and stories

What are discourses?

- Practices: complex communicative actions (not just the spoken word)
- Vehicles of contest and resolution. Actors are the vehicles of discourse
- **Both** structures and actions
- **Discourse complex**= Different discourses interact (interlocking narratives and practices) – occur everywhere such as popular/historical, scientific, ethical, economic, technological and political/legal
- **Discourses is the rules of behaviour being contested**
- *Scientific discourses*: e.g. climate change = hard to understand, discourse with its own internal rules – different discourses. Discourse in one area can lead to a discourse in another
- *Ethical Discourses*: e.g. who has access to which resources, also a debate about what happens over time = usually very complicated, many opinions – great difficulty in settling issues
- *Technological discourses*: problems with what we understand technological incapacity to be. These influence how we see and resolve environmental problems

Power

Types

- Coercive: forcibly, using threats etc.
- Persuasive – comes through leadership, not a relationship of domination
- Structural – just accept the world order as it is. Little questioning of the way things work

Institutions

“Institutions are persistent and interconnected sets of rules and practices that prescribe behavioural roles, constrain activity and shape expectations”

These may take the form of bureaucratic organisations, regimes (rule-structures that do not necessarily have organisations attached), or conventions (informal practices)

- Discourses tend to form institutions = *versions of structured power* & tend not to be questioned
- Organisations can be shaped by institutions
- Can include formal rules or informal ways of behaving that are deeply understood
- Institutional domains (types): social/cultural, economic, legal, political and administrative
- E.g. recycling – wasn't even thought of 30 years ago – now we feel selfish if we don't – an institutional change
- We have layers of institutions – some formal, some informal

Some (possible) features of institutions

- They are the embodied resolution of previous conflict
- They are persistent but changing
- They may enable change- but equally may obstruct it

- They can be source or object of conflict

The State: (entire country and it's governing bodies)

= a set of institutions, engagements and power relationships

Capacities of ecological governance:

- Knowledge capacity – what we know about the environmental problem
- Technological capacity – our ability to resolve a problem
- Economic capacity – our ability to afford to provide resources to deal with a resolution
- Community capacity – ability to mobilise support
- State capacity (powerful economic actor)
 - Communicative capacity – media etc.
 - Integrative capacity – not available to any other entity
 - Strategic capacity – work towards organising an effort from society
 - Implementation capacity – through considerable economic power
- Perspectives of the state:
 - Pluralist
 - Relatively equal status for all actors competing to determine the political/policy agenda
 - Power relatively equally divided between players
 - The state as the neutral arbiter between parties, to best benefit all of them
 - (relatively) autonomous actor
 - (neo) Marxist
 - Actors competing to determine the political/policy agenda divided according to their class position (economic power in favour of capital (industry))
 - Power unevenly divided between classes - with structural power a major consideration
 - The State as the 'representative' of the interests of capital

Political Economy

The ways in which power is organised around economic capacity has significant implications for social policy

Competing environmental world views:

- **ANTHROPOCENTRIC:** instrumental, developmentalist relationship to nature. Nature is seen predominantly as a resource for human use – relatively secular, progress oriented
- **ECOCENTRIC:** preservationalist relationship to nature: based on a romantic and/or ethical reevaluation of nature's contribution not only to notions of essential humanity (wilderness) but also the rights of intrinsic value of nature itself. Evolved quite radically in the last 30 years