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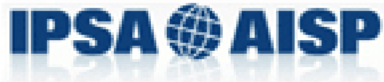

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Environmental Politics: Sustainability and the Politics of Transformation

Matthew Paterson

Books Reviewed

Barry, John and Eckersley, Robyn, eds (2005). *The State and the Global Ecological Crisis and the Nation-State.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Eckersley, Robyn (2004). *The Green State: Rethinking Democracy and Sovereignty.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Gendron, Corinne (2006). *Le développement durable comme compromis.* Montréal: Presses de l'Université du Québec.

Paehlke, Robert (2003). *Democracy's Dilemma: Environment, Social Equity, and the Global Economy.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Princen, Thomas (2005). *The Logic of Sufficiency.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Keywords: • Global environmental politics • Green political theory

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These books all attest to the considerable maturity of debates and research in environmental politics that has emerged in the last decade. If we look back at classic earlier books in the field (think of trailblazing books such as Andy Dobson's *Green Political Thought* of 1990), they look now to lack the nuance and richness of many of these works. We have moved beyond the need to establish the terrain, distinguish environmentalism from other ideologies, work out what is distinctive about the environment as a policy domain or political problem, and so on, and can now get our hands dirty with dealing with the complexities and messiness of environmental politics. In Latour's pithy phrase opening his book *Politics of Nature*: "What is to be done with political ecology? Nothing! What is to be done? Political Ecology!" (2004: 1).

These books all also demonstrate magnificently the centrality of environmental politics, or political ecology,[1] to politics itself. That is to say, you could take one

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of these books to someone studying elections, bureaucratic politics, advocacy coalitions, international security, global justice, or some other aspect of the study of politics, and show them (if they were open to listening) that unless they take ecology seriously, they do not properly understand their own object of study. All political systems and processes both depend upon and reproduce flows of and degradation of resources, such that political-ecological interaction is a condition of possibility of both politics in general and of any specific political form. These books amply show that understanding ecology is essential to understanding politics. This is no mean feat.

My aim here is to focus on three specific dimensions of these books: the way that they focus on the contemporary dynamics of environmental politics, and the potential transformations which exist to further the pursuit of sustainability; the question of democracy which is at the heart of those transformations; and the deep normative question of where such transformations ought to be headed.

Transformations

Robyn Eckersley's basic premise is that while modern political systems have been decidedly anti-ecological, they are currently undergoing important transformations, both in general and specifically, in response to environmental challenges, which environmentalists can push further to "green the state." She is thus less interested in an abstract critique of the state, capitalism, and so on, and more interested in an "immanent critique" – identifying what within existing systems and the way they are currently being transformed can be ecologically useful.

Eckersley argues that there have been three principal elements of global politics that have engendered ecological unsustainability. These are the competitive interstate system, global capitalism, and the weak character of liberal democracy. Among them, these have both generated patterns of development that are unsustainable, and also provided significant constraints to responding to the social and ecological disruptions generated by that unsustainable development. But at the same time, one can discern tensions or contradictions within these systems of power that serve to show the possibilities of *both* "greening" them *and* developing new forms of politics beyond them. Thus within the anarchic interstate system a set of processes Eckersley calls environmental multilateralism is emerging, entailing a transformation of interstate anarchy from a "Hobbesian" logic (of unremitting conflict) to a "Kantian" logic (of peaceful coexistence), capitalism is being greened by processes of ecological modernization, and experiments in discursive, deliberative and transnational democratic practice are emerging to make up for the anemic character of liberal democracy. The pursuit of sustainability entails principally pushing at these three sites to develop politics further into a set of overlapping "ecological democracies."

A similar purpose can be seen in many of these other works. John Barry and Robyn Eckersley's edited volume, perhaps not surprisingly, can be read as an effort to see how the state is undergoing a series of transformations in response to the "global ecological crisis." They state expressly that their basic purpose is to contest the unremittingly negative image of the state in most green discourse, not by blithely asserting the positive ecological contribution of the state, but by highlighting the transformations within and across states that make ecological "progress" possible. Chapters by James Meadowcroft, by Peter Christoff, and by

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Christian Hunold and John Dryzek set this out in general, schematic terms, not dissimilar to those elaborated by Eckersley in *The Green State*, while others either engage in case studies of specific countries or elaborate thematic elements in the "greening of the state": the chapters by Tim Hayward on the emergence of constitutional environmental rights, Eckersley on changing notions of sovereignty, or Ken Conca on new hybrid forms of governance at the global level.

Robert Paehlke similarly is interested in the specific contemporary possibilities for pursuing environmental politics. His interest is less explicitly perhaps in the transformation of political processes and structures, but nevertheless a question like "how can the opportunities presented by dominant contemporary political forces and trends be used for environmental purposes?" is at the heart of his analysis. In particular, he focuses on how shifts in economic production, from what he terms mass industrial production to electronic capitalism, create new obstacles to "greening" politics, but at the same time new opportunities. Corinne Gendron's analysis is similarly focused on political-economic dynamics, but with a more explicitly transformational intent. For her, the analysis is couched in terms of seeing sustainable development, as a discourse and a package of material shifts in production and its organization, with associated shifts in governance, as a large-scale, political-economic "compromise" between dominant and subordinate social forces, which aims to generate a new regime of accumulation guiding capitalism over the next few decades. Her use of the notion of compromise is specific here – drawing explicitly on Gramsci's (and later Gramscian) analysis of Fordism as precisely such a sociopolitical compromise.

Finally, Thomas Princen's analysis proceeds in a way that is broadly consistent with Eckersley's notion of "immanent critique." For while Princen's basic goal is to restate a core green normative agenda focused on limits (the need to self-limit our goals for material consumption in particular, to be focused on what is "sufficient" rather than on endless accumulation), much of his book is also designed to show that such norms of sufficiency are still rather more present (thus, immanent) in many contemporary contexts than we are used to assuming. His analyses of the Pacific Lumber Company's pioneering attempts to instate sustainable models of forestry, the Monhegan fisheries in Maine, and the resistance to automobile-led development in the islands in Lake Ontario right next to downtown Toronto are precisely designed to show that the possibilities for greening often exist even at the heart of the most overdeveloped, anti-ecological spaces.[2]

This focus on contemporary and potential transformations is to me crucial, and absolutely the right way to go in environmental politics. The days when we could either simply assert the unsustainability of states and states systems and thus advocate their abolition,[3] or blithely ignore such fundamental political questions regarding the environment, in favor of a managerialist response,[4] are over. The big questions remaining, however, are (1) "how do we understand the character of contemporary transformations with (and at times against) which greens must work?" and (2) "what political forces are driving them?" Here, I think that many of the answers in these books remain problematic. Broadly, I see a distinction to be made between accounts of this transformation based in historical sociology, and those drawing on traditions of political economy.

With many of the books here, there is an account (often implicit) of the development of the modern state that consists of analyzing how it has evolved through the functions it has performed. It started as a territorial, military state,

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became a national state from the late 18th century onwards, a capitalist state around the same time, a liberal state during the 19th century, a democratic state at the beginning of the 20th, and then a welfare state during the 20th century.[5] The question is then posed as the pursuit of an ecological function to the state – as Meadowcroft titles his chapter in Barry and Eckersley's book, "From Welfare State to Ecostate." Eckersley's argument depends on a similar narrative regarding the functions of states. Her "three core challenges" (interstate anarchy, global capitalism, and liberal democracy) correspond broadly to the three historically evolved functions of states outlined by Dryzek et al. (2003): territorial, capitalist, and liberal/democratic. Finally, Paehlke's history of the past 200 years, worth elaborating because he focuses on the economy rather than the state, has similarities with the implicit one of Eckersley or of Meadowcroft, and the more explicit historical-sociological account of Dryzek et al. (2003), in that it conceives of this historical period as a series of stages. His typology is less at the level of the state than the others, and rather conceives of these shifts in "apolitical" terms (thus reinforcing the view, below, that his ontology is of a separation of markets and politics rather than their integrated character). His model follows (although unacknowledged) the debates of the 1980s about what was variously called "the second industrial divide" (Piore and Sabel, 1984), "disorganized capitalism" (Lash and Urry, 1987; Offe, 1985), "flexible accumulation" (Harvey, 1989), or most commonly "post-Fordism" (Amin, 1994). Notably here, Paehlke follows the most conservative of these, that of Piore and Sabel. Their model, and his, is of a shift from craft production in societies still largely agricultural (through to the mid-19th century in the UK, a bit later elsewhere) to mass industrial societies from the late 19th century onwards, and to what he terms electronic capitalism (but which corresponds roughly to post-Fordism and so on in the earlier debates) which has emerged since the 1970s.

Notable here is how the term "capitalism" works in his argument. A concept left largely undefined, capitalism is contained in the definition only of the last of his three stages. What is specific to capitalism is thus rather unclear – is it the rapacious power of transnational corporations, the dominance of an ideology that he calls "economism," or something else? The heritage in the debates of the 1980s is worth recalling. There, Piore and Sabel's view was of stages essentially driven by, on the one hand, technical change and, on the other, the reaction to the alienation in assembly-line production or mass office work (like them, Paehlke [p. 51] is insistent that alienation is specific to that form of production, not capitalist social relations as Marx understood them). These two dynamics come together to produce exciting possibilities from new technologies (communications, automated production, and so on) to enable the re-emergence of unalienated work. Paehlke's twist appears to be (although he is not wholly consistent on this point) that only the last stage is regarded to be capitalist in a full-fledged fashion. This can be contrasted with the accounts of say Offe or Harvey, where all of the shifts in the organization of production and of the economy more broadly occur within a capitalist logic, where that capitalist logic can be fairly closely defined in terms of the social form arising from strict private property relations, the commodification of human labor, and competitive market exchange (a definition going back, fairly obviously, to Marx). The other important consequence of this conception is thus that the state is integral to capitalism, not external to it, emerging historically to create nationally homogeneous markets and enact the

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class interests of the emerging bourgeoisie (as in the enclosures of common land in England and Scotland, mentioned by Paehlke).

"Democracy's dilemma" becomes rather differently posed when viewed this way. Since Paehlke, like Eckersley or Meadowcroft, operates with an account in which the (democratic) state is ontologically external to capitalism, addressing the various problems (of sustainability, social justice, and the possibility of democracy itself) created by capitalism appears simply as a dilemma that governments have the ability to choose to deal with or not. Paehlke has plenty of passages where he says something like "governments can ..." or "governments should ...," all premised on this notion of the external relation between governments and capitalism. But from this rereading of history and with a more precise conceptualization of capitalism, governments suddenly become internal to the dilemma itself. States have evolved as part of capitalist development, "acting" regularly to promote capitalist development, and certainly not existing in some unproblematic way to "protect" society from the worst effects of such development. In this context, the "governments can"-type statements themselves need to be rethought since the model of the state having this type of agency is flawed. The political gains in favor of democracy, social justice, and more recently sustainability have been won by forms of social struggle against prevailing capitalist interests. His opposition between resistance and reform (or "systemic redirection" in his term [Paehlke: 26]) is thus misplaced. Resistance to capitalist predation is precisely what enables others to shape capitalist development in more "humane" fashions. And the state is one of the principal sites of these struggles.

The question of transformation, to my mind, is thus more fruitfully understood in terms of political economy. The question becomes "what elements in contemporary capitalism create possibilities for (further) greening?" If economic growth is, for example, understood as a structural imperative for modern states, then it is not possible to suggest that we can simply add an ecological function to the state without at the same time articulating how a path of economic growth can be pursued at the same time as achieving the radical reductions in resource use and pollution necessary to meet conditions of sustainability. For example, Meadowcroft argues by analogy that the social and political processes through which the welfare state emerged help us understand those processes by which green ecostates might be in the process of emerging. He is careful to elaborate both similarities and differences in the logics of welfare states and green states, and provides many useful insights concerning these similarities and differences, in particular, for example, concerning the timescale (50–80 years) over which it is reasonable to expect ecostates to emerge. But in both, the welfare and ecological dimensions to the state are seen as essentially contingent – functions which can be added or not to the range of things states do. Rather, from a political economy perspective, some functions are more structurally necessary than others. In particular, capitalist states have no option but to pursue conditions under which capital accumulation can be realized. Crucial parts of the analogy between welfare states and ecostates break down in this view. Specifically, the nature of political pressure for ecostates and welfare states is different. Meadowcroft discusses the different social bases of movements pressing for each, but what is missed is that in times of economic crisis, pressure for welfare states often increased (as classically in the 1930s), while it is difficult to see pressure for ecostates increasing in times of economic crisis. In addition, it is easier to see how welfare states, at the same time as responding

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to pressures from trade unions and social-democratic parties in particular, succeeded because they provided an economic model for accumulation itself (not just legitimation of capitalism as Meadowcroft avers) since the redistribution of wealth simultaneously expanded the effective demand for goods being produced (as Keynes in particular understood very well). In other words, welfare states became an integral part of reproducing capitalism itself. Despite the rhetoric of ecological modernization (which is widely contested by both greens as well as varied industrial and consumption interests and their neoclassical economic ideologists), it is difficult to imagine ecostates attaining the same integral status. It is clearly possible to envisage ecological growth regimes, but different from claiming that pursuing sustainability can ever become *essential* to the reproduction of capitalism and thus the legitimacy of the state.

It is here that Gendron's analysis comes into its own. Like many of us in environmental politics, Gendron's purpose is to elaborate a theoretical perspective capable of accounting for the political and socioeconomic dynamics of the environmental crisis. Specifically, she attempts to establish the usefulness of the French regulation school in political economy for understanding these dynamics. This school argues against neoclassical, orthodox Marxist, and contemporary institutionalist approaches to economics and attempts to show that particular patterns of capital accumulation are the result of concrete social "compromises" (rather than abstract laws of the market, the unfolding of class struggle, or the specificity of national institutional arrangements).[6] Capitalist society is thus analyzed in terms of projects to establish, maintain, and contest specific "regimes of accumulation." The classic regulationist analysis is that of Fordism (Aglietta, 1979), and much of the work in this school since the late 1970s has been concerned with elaborating the crisis of Fordism and the attempts to establish a regime of accumulation to follow it. Gendron proceeds in similar fashion in relation to environmental debates – explaining the limits of neoclassical environmental economics and ecological economics alike (Gendron: Ch. 1), and the importance of a regulationist approach to political ecology (Gendron: Ch. 2). This consists, for me, in two principal arguments she makes. First, the framework outlines not only a sociopolitical context within which political-ecological projects must be situated, an observation not dissimilar to that of Eckersley or Paehlke, but also the crisis-ridden character of this context. Political ecology came into its own precisely at the point that the Fordist regime of accumulation collapsed, and has developed since alongside continuing (but not particularly successful) searches for stable growth regimes. Second, she uses the framework to suggest forcefully that given that the pursuit of a growth regime is the result of social struggles between dominant and subordinate social groups, the way that the resolution of environmental crises plays out will be no different. The question is not so much for her social relationships to "Nature" (deconstructed brilliantly by Latour [2004], although problematized differently, in reasonably classical Marxist terms, by Gendron), but rather that ecological crises interact with socioeconomic crises by provoking social movements which arise directly out of the material dislocations associated with environmental degradation. While green movements are part of this, her analysis draws to mind more (although she does not make this explicit) the social dislocations we can already observe in relation to desertification, deforestation, and the like, and are at least projected to be huge in relation to climate change, which may well themselves be under way.[7] These movements of people and social dislocations present therefore a crisis of

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accumulation itself, and help to shape the political dynamics of the pursuit of a stable accumulation regime. The transformations of contemporary environmental politics are fundamentally about the way that these social struggles shape the possibility of a specific growth regime aiming toward sustainability.

At the same time, Gendron's analysis shows well the limits of Paehlke's effective assumption that economic globalization is, in its basic essentials at least, something occurring outside human agency. Rather, the regulationist perspective insists that all particular economic processes are the outcome of sociopolitical struggles between capital and other social forces, and the compromises produced are part of these ongoing struggles.

This approach to contemporary transformations makes at times for uncomfortable reading. For example, if we take it seriously, the innovations in environmental governance associated with climate politics become highly interesting. The range of mechanisms developed since the mid-1990s (in particular, emissions trading and joint implementation, but also including newer, less well-known processes such as the Carbon Disclosure Project) are widely understood by environmentalists, in particular on the more radical end of the spectrum, as deeply problematic practices, as they both privatize and commodify the global commons (for example, Bachram, 2004; Lohmann, 2005). Problematic they are, but their political genius, as viewed from this perspective, is that they *may* set in train a pattern of growth that simultaneously enables the pursuit of emissions reductions. This possibility exists as much for political as for narrowly economic reasons – these mechanisms are tying a rapidly expanding range of powerful financial actors into seeing climate policy as an opportunity to pursue their interests, rather than as a threat to those interests. But this possibility is produced by the particular resolution of struggles between capital and other social forces through which neoliberalism has been installed across the world and here affects environmental governance profoundly.

Democracy

A second crucial theme is the question of democracy. The books treat this question, however, in differing ways. Continuing from the previous discussion of Gendron, she has an (implicit) account of democracy as always containing a struggle between differing social forces. The success of a particular regime of accumulation is the result of a "compromise" between differing social forces (not dissimilar to Meadowcroft's analysis of the emergence of welfare states) rather than simply of an abstract economic logic. The state, in this essentially Gramscian view, is simultaneously the site at which capital attempts to secure its hegemony but also where it is occasionally forced to adapt to pressure from subordinate groups. Democracy is the result of this struggle rather than a neat model of governance.

Eckersley makes the question of democracy absolutely central to the transformations she describes, in contrast to Gendron, for whom it is implicit. However, from Gendron's point of view, Eckersley's arguments concerning the shift from liberal to ecological democracy appear relatively devoid of political argument, as she describes the shifts from one form to the other in terms of their formal features rather than the struggles entailed in pursuing them. Her argument is couched in terms of the weaknesses of liberal democratic forms prevailing in

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the last century or so (in western countries at least), which provide for low levels of political participation, low levels of deliberative decision-making, an atomistic individualist and often consumerist relationship between citizens and sites of democratic decision-making, and a democracy explicitly bounded within national-territorial contexts, failing thus to deal adequately with the trans-boundary problems which are constitutive of much environmental degradation. By contrast, she outlines a range of emerging democratic forms that enhance participation and deliberation, and communitarian politics as well as trans-nationalism, and a full-blown model of ecological democracy which takes these tendencies to their limits. Fundamental to an ecological democracy for her, is that traditional notions, based on a "community of membership" need to be supplemented with "communities of affectedness," meaning that the principle under which political, economic, and social decisions get made is that those affected by the decisions get to participate in them. And where such direct participation in decisions is not possible, as in the case of nonhuman interests, provision is made for representation of those interests also.

Paehlke has an even more "empty" account of democracy – of the state as a presumed democratic space. He asserts forcefully and correctly that transitions toward sustainability must be democratic, but is not that clear as to what precisely that means. He makes powerful claims, like those of David Held, about the need for global forms of and dimensions of democracy, and against decentralist or bioregionalist accounts of green politics (Paehlke: Ch. 6), but again they feel relatively "empty" – a description of a set of institutions. This is in significant difference to the arguments put forward by Eckersley, which have a much clearer focus on the character of ecological democracy both in terms of how political processes work and who gets to participate. What is, however, particularly interesting in Paehlke concerning democracy is the notion of the dilemma. This suggests the absence of a utopian solution and that politics deals with a series of ongoing dilemmas posed by the threefold pressures of sustainability, social justice, and economic globalization.

Where Are We Going?

Paehlke thus resists the utopian tendencies in environmental thought in favor of a pragmatic accommodation to dominant social trends and a focus on managing the dilemmas this throws up. His intent is to walk a line between accepting as a fact the existence of a free-market globalizing capitalism and insisting on the importance and possibility of pursuing his three bottom lines within that context. While he tries to walk this tightrope in a way that accepts that it might be possible to pursue sustainability in this context, it seems clear he does not think in fact it is possible to do so, especially when the quest is combined with demands of social justice. He gives plenty of evidence of deteriorating trends in environmental conditions, and the ways that neoliberal globalization contributes systematically to this degradation. He thus accepts neoliberal globalization more as *force majeure* than through conviction that it can be "greened."

Others make clearer the necessity of transforming this political-economic form in different directions. Eckersley and Gendron both suggest that neoliberalism is in fact being transformed as it attempts to deal with questions of sustainability, but also as social movements act to undermine the power of finance and transnational

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corporations, and overturn the free-market obsessions of contemporary governments. Their accounts of this process, however, are interestingly different, Eckersley drawing on the ecological modernization tradition focusing on technological change and different forms of state economic intervention, while Gendron focuses on the shifts in business discourse and practice brought about by social movement activism, and the potential for this to lead to an ecological regime of accumulation.

But it is in Tom Princen's *The Logic of Sufficiency* that we find a particularly persuasive restatement of the basic arguments that the pursuit of sustainability requires us to search for alternatives not only to the neoliberal form of capitalism, but perhaps to capitalist social logic altogether. He shows very effectively and engagingly (Princen: Chs 3, 4) that the pursuit of efficiency alone, at the heart of any attempt at "sustainable development," "ecological modernization," or other means to "green growth," cannot be relied on to meet the conditions of sustainability. Gains in efficiency (of energy and materials throughput per unit of output) are outstripped, and are likely to continue to be so, by growth in throughput per se. As a consequence, the pursuit of sustainability must incorporate a norm of sufficiency – a sense of what is "enough." In environmental discourse this is reasonably commonplace, but Princen argues the case in a more academically thorough fashion than most. He also does an extremely good job of integrating the narrow environmental argument for those in high-consumption countries to limit their consumption with a socio-ecological argument concerning the costs of a society oriented to endless accumulation for people in terms of working time – the balance between work, consumption, and other aspects of life (family, community, and so on). In this he has much in common with Paehlke, except for the diagnosis that the obsession with growth is integral to the generation of these problems. Paehlke outlines the paradox that we have increased incomes significantly, and introduced a whole range of technologies which appear to promise reduced working times, but under what he calls electronic capitalism working times have in fact increased for most people despite rapid technological change. To my mind, Princen's logic is more thoroughgoing – it is an obsession with growth itself which subordinates people to this imperative, in work as well as in other aspects of life.

Princen is bravely and unabashedly normative in his ambition, aiming to persuade readers of the irrationality of the dominant rationality organized around efficiency and endless accumulation, in favor of an ecological rationality focused around sufficiency. This makes the book inspiring and a highly useful counterbalance to, for example, Paehlke's accommodation with free-market capitalism. But, borrowing from Paehlke's title, and drawing on the contrast with the other books here, it raises what might be called the ecopolitical dilemma. How to balance the pursuit of a world based on the principle of sufficiency with the apparent need to pursue short-term environmental gains in the world we currently have? One answer, Princen's in this book, is to show that in fact there are many communities, firms, and individuals living at least parts of their lives on the basis of sufficiency at present. "If it exists, it's possible," as he says, quoting Kenneth Boulding (Princen: 355). But there is a fallacy of composition at the heart of this argument – such practices may be possible in particular niches, or for certain actors in a system, but not generalizable to the system as a whole. Princen's argument, in my view, ultimately depends on an idea that the norms underpinning

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behavior are the appropriate level of diagnosis, and thus to diagnose the problem in terms of the norms of efficiency and accumulation is sufficient.

This brings me back to my political-economy critique developed above, which applies also to Princen's arguments against economic rationality. As with the problems of imagining the emergence of an ecological function for the state, with Princen the problem is similar: if the generation of norms of accumulation and efficiency come themselves from a "deeper" social structure, which impels people to behave in those ways, then the solution cannot be only about new norms, but must also be about new social structures. Specifically, if a world organized around the commodification of land and labor, and competitive markets, *compels* actors to maximize and pursue efficiency, the *generalized* pursuit of sufficiency will lead necessarily to a crisis of social reproduction and legitimacy. Sure, some people here or there can act out the norm of sufficiency, but not everyone. To put it baldly, to talk about sufficiency is to talk about a noncapitalist world, with the radical change that that implies and the resistance from the powerful that it would entail. I am not sure Princen realizes (or would accept) the radical implication of his argument.

The ecopolitical dilemma is thus then reflected in how the other books treat implicitly this question. In Paehlke and Eckersley, and in many chapters in Barry and Eckersley, the dilemma is effectively resolved in the direction of short- to medium-term accommodation with capitalist logics, from Princen's point of view (and if we took the ecological dimensions of Paehlke's argument more seriously than he does himself) necessarily at the expense of sustainability. In Gendron, the same resolution occurs, but in a way which accepts more explicitly the theoretical rationale offered here – in a capitalist world we have no option but to articulate environmental discourse as a growth strategy.

The challenge thus seems to me to leave this dilemma open-ended. Princen is absolutely right in my view that we need to work toward a world which accepts limits to material consumption. His examples are useful points of departure for identifying how. But given the radical nature of the transformation envisaged, the challenge for environmental politics remains to work out how to do this while *also* working with the ways dominant political forces are currently transforming themselves as people like Eckersley show so effectively. The works discussed here are extremely useful starting points for thinking through this complex dilemma. Paehlke shows us the dilemmas democratic societies face in attempting to reconcile these competing agendas. And Gendron shows effectively that the particular resolution will likely be a *compromis* between the preferred projects of capital and the attempts by social movements to pursue more radical agendas. But there remains much to be done to understand how this process of political struggle and transformation works, and how, from Princen's normative agenda, it might be pushed in more radical directions.

Notes

1. Some get hung up on the distinction between environmental politics and political ecology (for example, Bryant and Bailey, 1997). Part of the critique of environmental politics (as they see it) is that it tends to frame "the environment" as external to human action, and thus does not think ecologically about the flows of materials, energy, and so on, which are constitutive of politics. I agree this should be central to the questions we ask, but think the contrast is overdrawn; the names of a field of study rarely foreclose

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different forms of analysis that apparently do not fit in its title (think of "International Relations," which can hardly be reduced to the caricature of analyses of interstate interactions). So I use both more or less interchangeably here.

2. This aspect of Princen's analysis shares many similarities with The Ecologist's pioneering *Whose Common Future? Reclaiming the Commons* (1993), which similarly detailed a huge range of still-existing commons regimes that they claimed could be the basis of an ecological political economy.
3. Bookchin's eco-anarchism (for example, 1982) is the most obvious target here, but it applies to much green discourse of the 1980s. See, for example, Spretnak and Capra (1985). For my own falling into this trap, see Paterson (1996).
4. Most political science literature on environmental problems still operates within this managerialist assumption. In International Relations, for example, the focus is normally on international cooperation and institution building and rarely problematizes the state or states system as systemic generators of environmental degradation. See Paterson (2000: Ch. 2).
5. One of the clearest statements of this in this sort of approach in environmental literature is in Dryzek et al., *Green States and Social Movements* (2003). See in particular their "brief history of the state" at Dryzek et al. (2003: 1–2). Dryzek et al. draw explicitly on historical sociologists, in particular Skocpol (1979). The chapter by Hunold and Dryzek in Barry and Eckersley's book treated here is a summary of the main empirical conclusions of their larger study.
6. For a general account of how regulationists distinguish themselves from these other approaches, see Boyer (2004: 17).
7. Think, for example, of the occasional arguments which have been made that a conflict like that in Darfur was in part provoked by migrations within Sudan which have been the result of changes in rainfall, themselves a facet of climate change.

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