

## Chapter 4 The Green Movement

I argued in chapter 1 that environmentalism brings insights to the study of society. It shows the need for basic archaeological work on sociology, in particular the bringing of nature into the range of factors relevant to social analysis. I showed in chapter 2, conversely, that sociology can also bring its wisdom to green searches for social and political solutions to environmental problems. I will focus in this chapter on another perspective that sociology can bring to environmentalism. Sociologists can also use their longstanding expertise explain the rising and waning of environmentalism as a value system and social movement. However, even though this is the sort of thing that sociologists are used to doing, it still requires them to restructure the way they look at the world to get a full and adequate understanding of the rise of environmentalism.

I will first discuss general explanations of social movement activity and, then, more particularly 'new' social movements of which the green movement is one. We will then be able to look at explanations for the rise of the green movement specifically in the 1970s and 1980s

### How do social movements develop?

A social movement can be defined as a collective attempt to further a common interest or goal through collective action outside established institutions. There are three key points to draw out here. First, the movement is collective: it involves a collective interest or goal and collective action in pursuit of it. Second, it is based on a shared interest or goal. Third, it pursues change outside established institutions, so differing from a political party.

Different sorts of general explanation of how collective action or social movements develop emphasize different foci of causality. Sociological explanations often emphasize social or cultural change in society as the basis for movement activity. Political explanations may focus on the character of political institutions or the capacity of social movements to organize politically.

(1) Structural theories (shown in column 1 of table 4. 1) emphasize the development of collective action or social movements as resulting from changing economic or social structures. On changing economic structure, the shift from pre-industrial to capitalist modes of production can be seen as having led to the growth of the factory system and urbanization and the accentuation of the division between capital and labour, all of which facilitated the formation and organization of the labour movement. The shift from liberal to late capitalism can be seen as precipitating the rise of social movements opposed to bureaucratic expertise and centralized corporate and state power. Similarly, the putative subsequent shift from organized to disorganized capitalism could be seen as leading to the breakdown of traditional class solidarity and a move to more plural and diverse political identifications and foci of conflict. On changing social structure, new social groupings, such as the industrial working class with the rise of capitalism and more recently the unemployed and new middle class, could be seen as susceptible to new ideological orientations and political values and facilitative of social movements. Structural explanations of social movement ideology rather than of the rise of social movements as movements may emphasize it as being geared around opposition to prevailing economic structures or contradictory social groupings.

Table 4.1 Explanations for social movements

	<b>Sociological</b>		<b>Political</b>	
	<i>1 Structural</i>	<i>2 Cultural</i>	<i>3 Political</i>	<i>4 Action</i>

<i>Focus</i>	Structural bases	Cultural change	Political institutions	Movement activity
<i>Explanation</i>	Changing Economic structure New social group/s	Value changes	Access to institutions of interest intermediation	Cohesion, organization, mobilization, leadership of movement
<i>Aims and ideology of movement</i>	Anti-prevailing system Interests of new social group	Cultural change	Political integration or change in political institutions	Movement as end in itself

(2) *Cultural explanations* (shown in column 2 of table 4.1) focus on cultural shifts and value changes in society. A typical example might be the post-materialist thesis discussed later in this chapter. This sees increasing standards of living and material satisfactions as leading to greater concern with non-material values. The decline of deference and liberation from previous social mores in the 1960s might be seen as other examples favouring the alternative social movements which grew at the time. Davies (1962) emphasizes the significance cultural mood of rising expectations. He argues that political change is less likely to be caused by material immiseration, as is often posed. Poverty and deprivation have more to do with resignation despair than revolution. Change is more likely to come out of rising expectations fuelled by increasing standards of living. This explanation fits well with the situation of post-war rising standards of living in the developed world. Cultural explanations of social movement ideology, meanwhile, may emphasize opposition to prevailing cultural norms or the promotion of alternative cultural values or lifestyles

(3) *Political explanations* (shown in column 3 of table 4.1) may see the openness of political institutions as facilitating and encouraging movement activity in society. Alternatively they may see traditional political institutions as failing to incorporate the demands and desires of particular collectivities in society. Collective agents, frustrated by their lack of access to established institutions, then resort to social movement activity outside them. Their aims may be geared around obtaining political representation or integration (see Scott 1990: esp ch. 6). This may apply to any number of social movements – the labour, women's, peace or green movements, for example. Tilly (1978), for example, has a historically and culturally relative conception of the development of collective action. He stresses the significance of access to institutionalized means of representation and the response of authorities to collective action in determining what direction that action takes, particularly with respect to whether it turns violent or not. Social movements, for him, are a means of mobilizing group resources when the institutionalized means of representation are closed off and groups' demands are politically repressed. Smelser (1963), on the other hand, sees structural conduciveness in the form of open political institutions as a condition for facilitating social movement activity.

(4) Action explanations, meanwhile, (shown in column 4 of table 4.1) react against the determinism of other explanations and attempt to restore power to social movements themselves. They stress that the development of a social movement is at least in part a function of its capacity to organize, mobilize and secure cohesion in pursuit of its objectives. Touraine (1981), for example, stresses processes of activism and achievement in the development of social movements. His concept of 'historicity' is intended to encapsulate the centrality of collective actors' development of knowledge of a situation in reshaping their place in it. Touraine takes a special interest in the objectives of social movements and the strategies they develop in fields of action where they are ranged against opposing forces. In other words social movements are not just an effect of structural, cultural or political change but a proactive force in themselves defining and

shaping the path of formation they take. Tilly (1978) who, as we saw above, takes a conjunctural and contingent view of social movement formation, also stresses the organization of a group, its success in mobilizing resources, be they material or popular support, and its cohesion on common interests, objectives and tactics. In other words, processes of group mobilization are as important as underlying shifts in economic, cultural or political patterns in determining the activity of social movements.

I will use this fourfold typology I have discussed to break up explanations of the rise of environmentalism below, focusing on political, action, cultural and structural explanations in turn. There are, of course, theories which could accommodate a number of these explanations in combination. Smelser (1963), for example, specifies six conditions for the development of collective action. Smelser's theory, set out in figure 4.1, is far from faultless, but it shows how a combination of the sorts of factors mentioned above, rather than any one in isolation, can contribute to the development of social movement activity. In his conditions 1 and 2, for example, Smelser draws attention to political and structural factors in social movement formation. In 3 he highlights cultural and ideological factors and in 5 and 6 action inputs. In 4 he lights the role of proximate conjunctural circumstances.

Figure 4.1 Smelser's six conditions for collective action

- 1 Structural conduciveness, e.g. political openness
- 2 Structural strain, e.g. societal conflicts
- 3 Generalized beliefs, e.g. shared ideas on grievances and action
- 4 Precipitating factors, e.g. events triggering action
- 5 Co-ordination of group, e.g. leadership, communication, resources
- 6 Authorities' social control, e.g. ameliorative or coercive response of authorities

### **A 'new' social movement?**

The categories set out in table 4.1 give us general frames within which the development of social movement activity can be made seen. There are, however, more particular accounts which try to specify what is new about social movements which have emerged in recent years (since the 1960s in particular) and are seen as novel and different from old social movements. The new social movements are said to include the green, women's, peace and civil rights movements all, contrasted with older social movements such as the labour and union or workers' movement.

As can be seen from table 4.2 the main basis on which old new social movements are often distinguished is that old social ovements are seen as being state-oriented and new social movements civil society-oriented. (1) *Location*: old social movements tend to be located in the polity in political parties (Labour and Social Democratic Parties, for instance), whereas the new social movements are autonomous movements outside conventional political institutions. (2) *Aims*: the aims of old social movements are to secure political representation, legislative political reform and rights associated with citizenship in the political community; the new social movements, however, want to defend civil society against political power and redefine culture and lifestyle in civil society rather than pursuing legislative change through the state. (3) *Organization*: social movements adhere to formal and hierarchical modes of internal movement organization whereas the new social movements go for informal or unstructured organization or 'networks' built up from grass-roots participation rather than structures of authority. (4) *Medium of change*: the old social movements are oriented towards political institutions through which change can be achieved. The new social movements go for newer and more innovative forms of direct action and work on redefinitions of meaning and symbolic representation in culture rather than change through the political apparatus.

Table 4.2 New and old social movements

	<i>Old social movements</i>	<i>New social movements</i>
Location	Polity	Civil society
Ideology and aims	Political integration Economic rights	Autonomy civil society New values/lifestyle,
Organization of movement	Formal and hierarchical	Informal network grass roots
Medium of change	Participation in political institutions	Direct action and cultural politics

Is the green movement 'new'? It has many features which fit the 'new' mould. Fierce debates have raged in the movement about the usefulness of participation in the political sphere and the pursuit of change through political institutions. Many greens prefer grass-roots based decentralized forms of participation or lifestyle politics through green consumerism or communes. Many have argued that political legislation is inadequate without widespread change in our acquisitive value systems and ways of living. This involves changes in modes of consciousness in civil society rather than the passing of new laws through the state. Furthermore, some organizations in the green movement certainly are keen to pursue non-hierarchical forms of political organization in their own movement, playing down the role of leaders with arrangements such as shared spokespeople and the rotation of personnel in office.

There are however also some features of the old social movements in the green movement. Many environmental organizations are concerned to get politicians to do things to remedy degradation. Green parties have sprung up throughout the developed world aimed at getting into political power even if only through coalitional alliances or at non-national levels. While many greens want to pursue radical democratic forms of internal movement organization this has not been a one-way battle. They have come up against so-called 'realists' who see formal leadership structures and hierarchies as the most effective way to pursue political change through conventional institutions. Furthermore, many more 'old-fashioned' environmental organizations adhere to standard conventional 'old' forms of hierarchy and membership participation.

Why does such a contradictory picture emerge? There are a number of points which can be made about the general attempt to apply the new/old dichotomy to social movements and there are some things about the green movement itself which make it difficult to fit it into these parameters. Scott (1990) argues that the old/new dichotomy involves an ahistorical categorization which reifies the initial formation stage when analysing the new social movements failing to see that old social movements started off from civil society beginnings and evolved into political entities. The current new movements may do the same under pressure from political reality and the necessity of achieving their objectives. Furthermore, the so-called new social movements are not so exclusively civil society contained as suggested by the 'new' category, often being concerned also with legislative reform and political access.

In addition to the formation of green parties and environmental lobbying of politicians in pursuit of legislative change, think also of women's movements, campaigns for abortion rights, sex discrimination legislation, changes in rape laws and fair political representation. Finally, there is

much variation among the new social movements between new and old forms of internal organization, and progression among some, green organizations included, towards more formal political structures. In many cases it is only the radicals and fundamentalists within the green movement who fit the 'new' bill well enough. This is not least the case for the diverse green movement from the National Trust and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds through Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace to Earth First, there is quite a mix between and within groups which make it difficult to classify the whole movement, let alone single groups within it like Greenpeace, into a new or old dichotomy.

Crook *et al.* (1992: 151, 162) deal with this question by breaking new social movements into three main components: value content, socio-cultural basis and organizational form. On value content they suggest that appealing to universal values and principles, as the new movements do, is nothing new. Such appeals are typical of modern Enlightenment ideas. On organizational form they suggest that the new social movements may well 'normalize' to more institutionalized and conventional forms in accordance with cycles of social movement formation of the sort highlighted by Scott. But they argue that such movements are 'new' in terms of their socio-cultural bases, breaking radically with old social movements in the shift from class and economic interest to socio-cultural and value bases.

Crook *et al.* may underestimate the value-content novelty of feminist and green inclusions of the private sphere and non-human interests in political theory. There may be new dimensions to new social movements in this respect as well as in their socio-cultural bases. But many features of new social movements in general and the green movement in particular are either conventional in internal organization and political in orientation or are becoming more over time.

Let me turn now to explanations for the recent rise in popularity of environmentalist values and politics. I will look at: (1) political explanations based on institutions of interest intermediation; (2) action explanations based on the role of environmental groups, the media and science in articulating environmental problems as issues; (3) cultural explanations such as the post-materialist thesis; (4) structural explanations based on changes in economic structure and the rise of social groupings such as the 'new middle class; and finally (5) environmental explanations which focus on objective environmental problems themselves. With the exception of the last, these fit into the categories of general social movement explanation outlined in table 4.1 above.

### **Political explanations: the failure of political institutions**

A first set of explanations for the rise of the environmental movement suggests that environmental demands become channeled into social movement form because of their exclusion from conventional political channels (such as parliament, traditional political parties, corporatist forums or the media). The focus of explanation is on the closure of established political institutions to environmental concerns. Social movements are seen as arising out of groups or demands which have to find alternative channels of expression. These they find in social movement activity in civil society or in organized participation in alternative parties in parliamentary forums. In other words one reason for the rise of environmental movements and parties is the exclusion of environmental issues from conventional politics and their channeling into alternative forms.

Two dimensions to this question can be highlighted here. First particular *groups* are excluded from political institutions and try to find other channels of expression. Second, this is the case for particular *ideas* or *demands*. I will use this distinction in my discussion below but, in the case of environmentalism, groups which support environmentalist demands and these demands themselves both seem to be excluded.

Scott (1990:143-7) argues that it is significant that environmental movements have become particularly prominent in countries like Sweden, Austria and the former West Germany which have had a strong role for corporatist arrangements of a narrow and exclusive sort. Corporatism involves the formation of a united body, acting as one, out of the bringing together of different individuals or groups. In politics the term usually refers to government by a partnership of governing politicians, business and labour. In such arrangements usually only a selective range of political actors (normally organised labour, government and employers) are included. Environmental concerns tend to be excluded from the deliberations of these actors in such forums. Formal democratic arenas (parliaments and political parties) where environmental concerns might be able to get access are circumvented by corporatist partners who take the major decisions outside them. Environmental social movements and parties are more likely to be formed in circumstances such as these where environmental concerns are excluded from mainstream politics.

Why are environmental issues excluded from corporatist processes and channeled into social movement form? Taking the distinction made above, the explanation can be broken down into reasons which focus first on the main social groups involved in environment. activity and second on the ideas of environmentalism.

First, the main group often said to be most concerned about the environment is the 'new middle class' - white collar professionals who work in the non-productive public sector, in education, health welfare for example. Members of this group are highly educated but at the poorer and more disenfranchised end of the middle class (Scott, 1990:138-9). Corporatist arrangements incorporate a number of groups - the organized working class, private business and government - but noticeably not the new middle class. Feeling excluded from mainstream politics, the new middle class are more likely to channel their energies into social movement activity or alternative parties than corporatist forums or the sort of parties that participate in them. They are particularly frustrated by the coincidence of political exclusion with their relatively high level of cultural and educational assets. Their educational privileges and articulacy clash with their relative economic disadvantage and political exclusion, leading to frustration and ferment channeled through alternatives to main institutions,

The second dimension of the exclusion of environmental concerns from corporatist arrangements moves on from the social base environmentalist movements to their ideas. Environmentalist ideas are perhaps most prominent in the emphasis they give to questioning industrialism, economic growth and technocratic scientific rationality. These, however, are the very values corporatist actors are most committed to sustaining and pursuing with ever greater efficiency and success. The industrial working class, private business and government are all committed to economic and industrial growth to provide jobs for workers, business profits and a sound economic base financing government expenditure and securing electoral success. In other words, not only is the main social group associated with environmentalism excluded from corporatist arrangements but the ideas of environmentalists could hardly be more at odds with the ideologies of the partners involved in such arrangements and so are likely to get short shrift from them (Scott 1990:146).

The rise of the green and other new social movement ideas can also be seen as a political as well as environmental reaction against corporatist-bureaucratic government. In Western Europe corporatist settlements were set up in the twentieth century to incorporate politically capital and labour and to undermine class conflict. However, corporatism has often been a form of elite politics that involves the participation only of the leaders of these classes and the marginalization of other interest groups. New social movements are seen as a response to social and political exclusion. According to corporatist closure theory they are an attempt to gain access for excluded groups and issues but also to propose anti-exclusive and anti-centralist political organization. They propose civil society initiatives, inclusive participation, autonomy, decentralization and universal as

against sectional values and try to implement these in their own internal structures. Social movements have served similar functions in Eastern bloc communist regimes where they provided a form through which citizens could oppose centralized regimes.

If the corporatist closure explanation is correct, it may show why environmentalist activity has been less radical and oppositional in the USA and more oriented to mainstream political institutions. USA politics have been less bureaucratic, centralized and corporatist and more focused on processes like lobbying, constitutional interpretation and litigation, which are more open to movements and interest groups. This is not to say that such groups do not require resources to pursue their demands or that such resources are distributed equally (see Dahl 1985). But the political system is sometimes supposed to be more open than in corporatist countries and this may explain the lesser degree of oppositional anti-politics radicalism among the US ecological, civil rights, peace and women's movements (see Crook et al. 1992:137, 159; Lowe and Rudig 1986:528). Corporatist closure may also help to explain why the radical green movement has been less prominent in civil society social movement activity in Britain than elsewhere in Western Europe. Britain has a public inquiry system which can process ecological demands, integrate them into the political system and minimize radicalization of the movement arising out of exclusion and marginalization (see Lowe and Rudig 1986:536).

There are, however, limitations to political explanations for the rise of environmentalist movements based on the closure of established institutions. There are four points: the first relates to forms of political exclusion other than corporatism; the second to the role of institutional openness as well as closure in fostering the growth of environmental movements and parties; the third to the role of corporatist closure in inhibiting rather than fostering movement activity; the fourth to the inability of political exclusion explanations to explain the rise of environmental concern in the first place.

The first point is that corporatism does not have a monopoly on political exclusion. The first-past-the-post electoral system, for example, under which it is difficult for small parties to get representation proportion to their support, has excluded the Green Party, and so green issues, from the political agenda in Britain (Dijkink and der Wusten 1992).

Furthermore, there may be cultural or electoralist as well as institutional reasons for the exclusion of environmental issues from mainstream political concern. Parliaments as well as corporatist forums may exclude such concerns from their agendas. Politicians may, for instance, perceive that environmental issues are not important, are subservient to greater goals such as economic growth or are electorally viable enough for them to pursue. In other words, if exclusion of environmental issues from the mainstream political agenda is a factor in the rise of environmental movements and parties, this may be due to reasons other than, or in addition to, the presence of corporatist institutions.

A second issue is raised by the question of electoral systems mentioned above. One reason why the green movement may have been less successful politically and culturally in Britain could be due to nature of the electoral system which excludes small parties and prevented the Green Party from getting a foothold in political institutions and access to a public profile. In fact it could be argued that political *openness* through proportional representation (PR) rather than, or as well as, corporatist political *closure* has been a factor in the success of the green movement in corporatist countries (Scott 1990: 147-8). This would fit with Smelser's (1963) stress on structural conduciveness and political openness as facilitating the formation of collective action. In the former West Germany, for example, world's most famous green party - Die Grünen - benefited from the party list system in which a party gaining 5% of the vote is entitled to parliamentary representation. Not only does this give small parties in parliament national prominence but they also become eligible for financial support (Yearley 1991:88-9). Political openness then, could be an explanation for the rise of the green movement corporatist countries.

A third problem is that it seems plausible to suggest that corporatist closure could lead to the pursuit of environmental objectives through parliamentary channels rather than alternative social movements. Environmental legislation could be passed through parliament using the space left by the hiving off of major decision-making into corporatist forums. Corporatist closure, far from enabling social movement activity, could disarm it by leaving space for mainstream parliamentary participation. Fourth, political exclusion explanations in general do not explain the rise of concern for environmental problems. They only explain why that concern, once it exists, becomes channeled into social movement activity or green parties rather than through established political institutions. Other explanations are needed to explain why environmental concern arises in the first place. These may be provided by action, cultural, structural or environmental explanations of the sort I will discuss in the rest of this chapter.

### **Action explanations: environmental groups, the media and science**

First let me look at action explanations for the rise of environmentalism. These suggest that environmental concern and the green movement are not simply products of political, economic, social or cultural structures but that they are articulated and popularized by social and political actors in the media, science and environmental groups. The emphasis here is on action rather than structure and subjective agency rather than external determination.

1 *Environmental groups*. Some analysts are interested in the political articulation of green issues by pressure groups and political parties and the mobilization of public opinion behind them in pursuit of political change (see Lowe and Goyder 1983; Spretnak and Capra 1986).

Yearley (1991: chs 2 and 3) takes a 'social problems' perspective on the rise of environmentalism, focusing on the definition and articulation of environmental problems by social actors rather than their objective existence as such. The objective existence of environmental problems themselves is not enough to give rise to environmental awareness and concern. Explaining the work of Kituse and Spector (1981) Yearley argues that:

'the mere fact that there were objective circumstances which constituted a potential problem was not enough for a 'social problem' to emerge . . . sociologists concerned with social problems should suspend any interest in whether the objective circumstances merit the existence of a social problem or not ... they should focus on the social processes involved in bringing an issue to public attention as a social problem'. (1991:49-50)

And later:

'it might be tempting to argue that the objective problem has finally found its way into the public consciousness. The social problems perspective prevents us from falling into that way of rewriting history'. (p. 52)

The 'correctness of social problems claims' is, for social problems analysts, Yearley argues, 'comparatively unimportant' (p. 115).

He argues that the rise in the public prominence of green concerns in Britain has been the product of the moral entrepreneurship of organizations like the Royal Society for Nature Conservation, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Greenpeace. These define and shape certain environmental phenomena as problems using campaigns, the media and politicians and mobilizing sections of the public behind their social problem claims. Environmental problems do not become such by virtue simply of their objective existence; they do not become environmental problems



until they are defined as such. And this definition and its popularization is engineered and shaped by pressure groups and the environmental lobby.

Eyerman and Jamison (1991; Jamison et al. 1990) also propose an action perspective which, while recognizing the role of external political and historical circumstances, stresses the active role of movement personnel. In particular they emphasize the creative role of ideas and cognition in social movements - what they call 'cognitive praxis'. They argue that social movements developed in the latter two of the three countries they looked at - Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands - when three types of knowledge - cosmological, technological and organizational - were combined by environmental activists. The cosmological dimension involves the translation of scientific ecology and analyses of natural processes into a social political philosophy, as in the burst of political ecology publications in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The technological dimension involves ideas about technological processes involved in environmental despoliation and the conceptualization of alternative technologies. The organizational dimension involves the identification of radical participatory democracy as a desirable goal. When combined, these three dimensions made environmentalism into a social movement. This being so, Eyerman and Jamison emphasize, like Touraine, (1981), action and knowledge and the role of movement actors and intellectuals rather than just the external material structural determination of movement fortunes by economic, social or cultural change.

Yet it is important to note that political activity cannot alone or in all cases account for the rise of environmental concern. Dijkink and van der Wusten (1992), for example, suggest that there is a high level of environmental concern in countries like Spain and Italy without strong environmental groups there. Let me move on to other 'action' explanations.

**2 The media.** Yearley identifies a key actor in the definition, articulation and popularization of environmental problems as the media. The environmental organizations he looks at, Greenpeace in particular, are shrewd and skilful in their use of the media, designing their campaign activities to be visual, dramatic and easily presentable by the media and especially TV.

Other analysts draw attention to the emphasis on cultural symbols, icons and images, rather than discursive arguments, in new social movement activity. This makes them especially accessible to the media. New social movements, it is argued, are not directly political in the sense of trying especially to obtain administrative or legislative decisions. They are concerned as much to present symbols which challenge dominant cultural codes (Feher and Heller 1983; Melucci 1989). The symbols and language of new social movements are critical, oppositional and adversarial, vague yet simple and compact, visible and didactic. They include signs, badges, banners, chants and utterances calling for 'stops' or 'bans' and warning of danger. Symbols include clothes, taste, behaviour and diet - in short, lifestyle. Demonstrations of meaning are public and visual: marches, rallies, sit-ins, festivals, performances and so on. Furthermore, the presentation of cultural meaning by new social movements is often the substance and end of their activity as much as the form for presenting a case or the means for achieving another end. Social movement activity is about the very living and expression of alternative meaning. All this is unusual, visual and suitable for media, especially television presentation, and access to the media is central to the articulation and publicizing of environmental problems and the mobilization of concern and movement activity (Crook et al. 1992:154-7).

**3 Science.** Scientists are another group who could be added to environmental groups and the media as central to the turning of objective environmental phenomena into environmental problems and arousing green concern and political activity.

Yearley (1991:ch. 4), however, suggests that science is an unreliable and insufficient friend to the environment. There are a number of reasons for this. (1) Many environmental problems are based

in scientific and technological developments, e.g. CFCS, nuclear power, motor vehicles etc. (2) Many scientists actually line up on the side of industry against the environmentalist lobby. On issues such as food safety, toxic waste and nuclear power, scientists are as often to be seen opposed to the green movement as in support. Many greens take arguments (1) and (2) further. They argue science is part of the ideology of industrialism and that modern science has an exploitative view of nature concerned with its instrumental use for human ends and its manipulation, domination and control. Enlightenment rationality, it is argued, needs to be replaced by a new science which is holistic and more sensitive to nature. (3) Scientific knowledge is sometimes incorrect or incomplete. Scientists sometimes have to revoke previous claims or do not have sufficient knowledge to make judgments on all environmental issues because of, say, lack of resources, insufficient information or the complexity or unobservability of ecological phenomena. In these respects, scientists are 'a poor ally to environmentalists' (p. 129). (4) Scientific observations are open to different interpretations and scientific knowledge cannot make epistemological claims of certainty. (5) As well as being unreliable in these senses, science is also insufficient because making judgments about which parts of the environment need protection involves moral rather than scientific issues and deciding on policy must be based on practical and political judgment. Thus science alone is not a sufficient guide to making claims or proposing solutions in the green case.

There are three sets of problems here: first, in relation to science's reliability and sufficiency; second, in relation to its alleged industrialist and exploitative nature; and third, in relation to the idea of alternative green science. Science is more of a friend to the environment than the points made by Yearley and greens outlined above suggest.

1 Unreliable a friend to the environment as science may be, it has been as significant a friend to it as an enemy. Scientific discoveries have been basic to the definition of environmental problems as problems and to the revival of environmentalism in the 1960s, 1970s and onwards. The detection of ozone depletion, climate change, acid rain, the effects of exhaust fumes, pesticides and detergent use, to take just some examples, and of the origins of these problems in CFCS, the burning of carbon fuels and so on, have depended on scientific discovery. In relation to points (1) to (4) in the paragraph above, science is certainly in the very strict sense unreliable. It is partly responsible for some environmental problems, can be made to line up in defence of practices which will perpetuate them, is fallible and falls short of omniscience and cannot make epistemological claims of absolute certainty. Yet, given its role in identifying and solving environmental problems, it is as reliable a friend as the environment is likely to get. Furthermore, while insufficient in the senses Yearley outlines, it is also essential to the resolution of environmental problems.

2 It is right that science has been and is heavily determined by industrialist rationality, particularly by market and commercial priorities. However, the problem here is in the economic and political circumstances within which the priorities of science are decided and not in the necessary nature of scientific procedure itself. Modern science can be put to environmentally friendly uses in the context of different criteria and priorities for its operation. The problem with the domination and exploitation of nature criticism, meanwhile, is that the characteristics of science that critics point to here - measurement, prediction and technical control - can be used to dominate or exploit but not necessarily so. In fact, they can be used for quite the opposite - measuring and trying to control pollution in order to protect the environment, for example. Furthermore, measurement and prediction are separate from technical control. The latter involves a technological use to which scientific discovery can be put, given certain economic priorities and political decisions. It is a product of wider socio-economic circumstances and of the technological use of science rather than of science itself.

3 These points suggest that science is not necessarily an enemy of the environment. On the contrary, it is an essential part of solutions to environmental problems. This implies that a different science would be neither necessary nor desirable. In fact ecological and quantum approaches which green science advocates propose as an alternative are problematic. First, they are not holist as such advocates propose. Ecology, for example, studies the interrelations between species and organisms rather than wholes as above and beyond the parts. Second, this is just as well, because if they were holist (as opposed to relational) they would have dangerous implications in valuing systems over individuals, as suggested in chapter 3 above. Furthermore, they would be flawed as explanations (see chapter 6 below).

Modern science, in short, like environmental groups and the media, has been and is an important factor in the identification and publicizing of environmental problems and the growth of the green movement. One strength of Yearley's social problems analysis is that he provides a corrective to sociologically determinist nations which focus on economic and industrial change, changes in occupational structure or value changes in the revival of environmentalism in the 1970s and 1980s. He shows how environmental issues do not merely reflect an objective reality or external conditions but are shaped into environmental issues by green organizations, the media and science.

However, it is important that a focus on the social definition of environmental problems should complement rather than be counterposed to explanations based on the objective existence of environmental problems and wider economic and social processes involved in their articulation into socially defined issues. There are problems with the extent to which Yearley takes his social constructionist approach. It is too much, for example, to dismiss the idea that objective problems can force their way into public consciousness. His assertion that the correctness of social problems claims is comparatively unimportant is too strong. Objective environmental problems are what social problems claims appeal and respond to, and environmental explanations are as important as social action approaches in showing reasons for the rise of environmental concern and the green movement. I will return to environmental explanations for the rise of the green movement. But let me look first at cultural and structural explanations.

### **Cultural explanations: value changes and the post-materialist thesis**

There are explanations of the rise of environmentalism based on the role of value changes in capitalist liberal democracies. These link with economic explanations because they see value change as rooted in economic changes.

The key explanation which focuses on value changes draws on Inglehart's (1971 and 1977) analysis of the rise of post-materialist values since the 1950s and 1960s in the Western world. Inglehart's thesis was proposed in the 1970s following the post-war economic boom, increasing state intervention in the provision of welfare rising standards of living in the developed world. These developments were coupled with the rise in the late 1960s of social movements concerned with civil rights (especially of women and ethnic minorities) participatory democracy and peace and of the anti-establishment and anti-materialist student and hippy movements.

The post-materialist argument is that with rising standards of living in the developed world many peoples' material wants are being satisfied. Consequently people are becoming more oriented towards less acquisitive and non-material goals to do with factors such as quality of life, intellectual and spiritual development, political rights, participation and the environment (see Cotgrove 1982:chs 2 and 3; Lowe and Rudig 1986:513-18).

There are three critical questions which could be asked about the post-materialist thesis.

1 Is the satisfaction of material needs more likely to lead to the creation of new material needs than to post-materialism? The post-materialist thesis is based on a fixed idea of basic material needs and a hierarchy of 'higher' needs which build on these. This is problematic. What basic needs are may be malleable and open to redefinition. In societies with rising standards of living increasing material satisfactions may lead to a widening range of things regarded as basic material needs rather than a transfer to non-material needs. The evidence of a growing range of consumer goods which are deemed to be 'standard' in developed industrial nations (colour TVs, videos, computers, microwaves etc.) may suggest this to be an equally plausible thesis about the possible consequences of material improvement.

2 Jehlicka (1992:7) casts doubt on the empirical basis of postmaterialism. He argues that evidence from a survey of green voters in EC countries shows a diversity of concerns among them, those among the German and, to some extent, Dutch populations being the only ones who really fit the post-materialist mould well (see also Kreuzer 1990). He suggests, significantly, that the only common peculiar green voter concern across the different countries is concern for the environment. This suggests the possibility of an environmental rather than a cultural explanation for the rise of environmentalism. I will come back to this.

3 Another problem is that there may be reasons other than increasing material satisfaction for the rise of post-material values. Inglehart's description of post-materialism as a set of values and concerns could be accepted without accepting post-materialism as an analysis which locates them in material satisfaction (Lowe and Rudig 1986:516-18). Post-materialism could, for example, be the result rather than the cause of the rise of new social movements giving high priority to post-material issues. Or it may be due to an increased profile for environmental issues in the media or education. It could plausibly be the result of a growth in white collar public sector jobs which tend to be concerned with social welfare, educational improvement, public health and so on, rather than an improvement in the standards of living of people in such professions or others. Or it could be a result of economic, social and political changes in society, associated perhaps with growth and bureaucratization, which lead to an objective escalation of the environmental and political problems post-materialists are concerned with, materialism could be rooted in objective problems in the identified in post-material discourse rather than in external economic or social changes. Both the original post-materialist and these other possible explanations suggest, meanwhile, that it is appropriate to see the basis of values in social or environmental processes rather than to see concern or action as deriving from values. Rather than analysing the basis for concern or in values, how values are created and shifted through action context of particular interests, structural conditions and power relations needs to be analysed (Lowe and Rudig 1986:537).

### **Structural explanations: social structure and the 'new middle class'**

Two explanations based on changes in social structure are often given for the rise of the green movement. One is that reorganization of the social structure in advanced capitalist countries has loosened traditional class-based political allegiances. These have been replaced by more value-based non-class cleavages and movements. The second is that the rise of environmentalism is a product of the growth of the 'new middle class'.

*1 Changing class structure and political allegiances.* A number of processes are said to have contributed to the decomposition of class structure. The division between ownership and control in enterprises has split the capitalist class and, together with the growth of the state, led to a large managerial white collar middle class, many of whom work in the public sector. The working class has become divided by contradictory processes of growing affluence on one hand unemployment and immiseration on the other. Increasing post-war social mobility, particularly from the working class into the middle-class, has diluted class cohesion and identity. All this is said have shaken up

and loosened traditional class identities, consciousness and political alignment. There is a decreasing amount of voting on class lines across the board, whether by working-class people for left-wing parties or middle-class people for the right, a phenomenon described as 'absolute class dealignment' (Heath et al. 1985).

The decline of class economic interest as a basis for political allegiance and loyalty to political parties has led people to owe political allegiance more on value or socio-cultural bases and to movements other than traditional political parties. This favours the new social movements who do not appeal to specific economic interest groups but argue on the basis of universal values and offer an alternative to traditional parties. None of this is to say that class interest is no longer subjectively relevant or should not be an objective factor on which people act. It is merely to say that economic interest and class bases of political allegiance have loosened to the advantage of non-economic non-interest-based and non-class movements like the green movement.

*2 The New Middle Class.* One other possible explanation for the rise of environmentalism in the 1970s and 1980s is that it is based on the growing significance of a social class group especially sensitive to post-materialist environmentalist issues - the 'new middle class'. The new middle class is perceived to have arisen out of changes in occupational structure such as the growth, with the division of ownership and control, of managerial occupations and, with the rise of the welfare state and the service sector, of public sector white collar employment. Ecology is widely seen as a predominantly middle-class issue which only the middle classes have the luxury to be concerned with and the green movement is popularly seen as being composed mostly of middle-class activists.

There are four main problems with the class values link posited here. There may be a link but it is more complicated than it first seems. To get a more accurate picture it is necessary to distinguish first between different types of environmental organization, second between different fractions of the middle class, third to investigate the direction of causality in the class-values link and fourth to look at whether it is in the interest of middle-class people to be environmentally concerned. I will come to reasons why middle-class people may be more environmentally concerned when I come to the third and fourth points.

1 The middle class-environmentalism link is complicated when the new environmentalism, symbolized by groups such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace, is distinguished from the nature conservationism of groups like the National Trust, the Ramblers' Association and the Royal Society for Nature Conservation (see Cotgrove 1982:ch. 1; Yearley 1991:ch. 2; Lowe and Goyder 1983:pt. 2). 'New' environmentalists tend, for instance, to favour more radical forms of direct action than nature conservationists and dismiss the possibility of technocratic fixes, believing in the need for fundamental structural change in the economic and social value systems and institutions of the developed countries. Nature conservationists tend to be more moderate and defensive on such issues and focus on reforms within existing structures. This is not a clear-cut distinction as nature conservationists do sometimes use direct action and often are reacting against the broader imperatives of industrialization (Cotgrove 1982:11-12), while new environmentalists on the other hand do put a lot of work into lobbying for legislative and political reform. However, there is a difference of emphasis and in the sorts of environmentalism that different fractions of the middle class tend to support.

Survey evidence collected by Cotgrove (1982:19-20) shows slightly higher rates of employment for nature conservationists in market than non-market sectors and much higher rates for new environmentalists in non-market than market occupations. Furthermore, focusing on the shared middle-class background of environmentalists of both groups tends to gloss over differences according to age and political ideology between new environmentalism and nature

conservationists. New environmentalists are more left-wing and less sympathetic to economic individualist ideas than nature conservationists and tend to be younger.

2 Focusing now on new environmentalism brings us to the second complexity mentioned above: that it is misleading to see environmentalism as a middle-class issue when it tends to be the concern of specific fractions of the middle class with other fractions being amongst its fiercest critics. Cotgrove's data show that new environmentalists are concentrated in middle-class occupations in the non-market sector especially in service professions in education, social work and health. Middle-class workers in industry and the market sector are very likely to be opposed to the green movement. Furthermore, the middle-class categorization glosses over differences within that class according to other criteria such as political attitudes. The 'new middle class' radical environmentalists are critical of market values and hierarchical and non-participative structures and are committed to non-material values, on all of which middle-class market sector industrialists hold reverse opinions.

All this suggests that the image of the new environmentalist as a sandal-clad social worker is a more subtle perception of the complex truth than the simplification that all greens are 'middle class'! The above points imply that the non-market occupational location of the environmentally concerned explains their environmental sympathies, and this brings us to the third point noted above on the direction class-values causality.

3 This is a controversial question among sociologists who have often wished to establish the social bases of values and political behaviour. However, political sociologists have been less confident in recent years in arguing for the class determination of political behaviour because of theoretical critiques (see Hindess 1987) and empirical controversies (Heath et al. 1985) on the issue. Many analysts suggest that value orientations cannot be read off from objective economic interests, that classes do not have clear partisan as opposed to instrumental political commitments or that class is only one among many other significant social factors, such as regional location, according to which political behaviour can be classified.

Cotgrove (1982:93-7) does seem to suggest that, on the environmental question, peoples' values are related to their relationship in their occupation to the marketplace. He argues that new middle-class environmentalists work outside the market sector and have 'an everyday occupational commitment to non-material goals and values'. This 'is an expression of the interests' (p. 95) of people who work outside the dominant institutions of capitalist societies where decisions are made according to economic rather than non-material values. Workers in the productive market sectors, however, have an everyday commitment to market economic values and the non-material values of environmentalism are alien to them.

However, Cotgrove (pp. 44-5) is sceptical about the idea that peoples' occupational role determines their value orientation. On the basis of further survey evidence he proposes that people tend to choose their occupation on the basis of their already existing value commitments rather than vice versa. Post-materialists tend to choose occupations involving working with people, achieving, non-material satisfactions, self-expression and intrinsic rewards. Materialists tend to choose jobs offering status, security, money and extrinsic rewards. Values influence choice of occupation rather than the other way round. On the other hand this still leaves open the question of the circumstances in which people gain the values which influence their occupational choice. This could plausibly be related to home background and so leaves room for a class explanation.

4 A fourth problem with explanations of environmentalism as a middle-class movement rests on the motivation often imputed to middle-class people for being environmentally concerned. It is argued that support for new social movements is an attempt by a credentialed yet politically excluded and relatively economically disadvantaged group to achieve political clout (Scott

1990:138-9). Or the new middle class are seen to have an interest in environmental protection because it involves expanding the state regulatory apparatus in which they are heavily involved. There will be more jobs for them and they can accumulate greater powers for themselves out of intervention to protect the environment. The ecology movement is an instrument for self-interested state personnel to use to their advantage (Whelan 1989).

However, it is difficult to see a basis for economic interest in middle-class concern for the environment. Radical environmentalism argues for slowing down growth and rates of consumption. A comfortable group, yet one which perceives itself to be materially disadvantaged relative to otherwise comparable groups, would not be likely to perceive cuts in growth as in its interest. This is even more the case when it is considered that the expansion of the state in the post-war period has been financed by growth and would suffer from its running down. Material disadvantage and political exclusion may lead the middle class to oppositional, critical and post-material values arising out of social experience. But such values do not seem to offer much in their content to the objective interest of this group. Furthermore, environmental problems have a universal effect and, if anything probably affect the working and living conditions of working-class groups more than the middle class. Class is an economic category based on shared objective economic interest. Yet middle-class concern for the environment seems to be based more on values and socio-cultural factors. Without an explanation based on material interests, middle-class concern for the environment seems less of a class explanation. It may be class-based but does not seem to be class-driven (see Lowe and Rudig 1986:522-4; Yearley 1991:81-2; Crook et 1992:145-6).

So there does appear to be a link between membership of the new middle-class and concern for the environment but it may be susceptibility to environmental concerns which determines occupational position rather than *vice versa*. Occupational position reinforces already existing value orientations. The growth of new middle-class occupations may have been important for the consolidation and strengthening of 1970s and 1980s environmentalism but perhaps not a key factor in its rise.

This still leaves partially open the question of the social bases of the revival of environmental concern in the 1970s and 1980s. If the growth of new middle-class occupations only partially explains this, then there is space for a post-materialist theory based on the significance of post-war rising standards of living and a political sociology of interest group articulation of green issues. It also leads us to the most obvious explanation yet that most poorly considered in the sociology of environmentalism: that environmentalism is a response to environmental problems.

### **Environmental explanations**

I have already questioned Yearley's (1991) argument that objective problems are comparatively unimportant to sociological analyses of the rise of environmentalism. Yearley himself recognizes the problems with such a view when he suggests that post-materialist arguments:

'tend to overlook two things: the specifically environmental aspects of green attitudes and the particular events (and their social and political contexts) which prompt people to take an interest in green issues ... there are specific stimuli to ecological protest'.

Among these Yearley (1991:82) lists Chernobyl, food scares and the Exxon Valdez Alaska oil spill as examples. An environmentalist disposition is in part a result of 'particular, personal responses to environmental threats and problems'. There are 'certain types of development which frequently

lead to collective responses' (p. 83), the building of nuclear power plants being an example (pp. 82-7),

One problem of theories discussed so far is that they play down or gloss over the 'objective' roots of environmentalism. Environmentalism is a product of the work of green interest groups, the media or scientists, further facilitated by factors such as rising standards of living which may free some people to worry about non-material matters, and the growth of occupational groupings susceptible to environmental concerns. But environmental consciousness is also related to objective problems which are its stated concern and not just to external social causes.

Explanations of environmentalism can be too sociological. They explain environmentalism in terms of external social factors, but they too often exclude problems identified in the content of its discourse from having a bearing on the explanation of its rise. In reducing environmentalism to social causes they deny the validity of the content of environmentalist discourse. It is reasonable to suggest that there might have been an escalation of objective problems in industrial societies of the sort identified by greens (resource depletion, traffic fumes, global warming, ozone depletion) which, defined and articulated within a particular political, economic and social milieu, are part of the explanation for the rise of environmental concern.

Environmentalism should be seen not just as a reaction to a set of secondary political, economic and social changes but also to objective problems to which it actually addresses itself. It is the experience of environmental problems which concern environments and without which it would be difficult for them to define problems as existing or arouse popular concern over them.

Cotgrove (1982) points out that without alternative value systems capable of interpreting environmental costs as a problem and formulating alternative criteria of evaluation according to environmental rather than economic goals, such problems would never become articulated as such. But equally it is the objective existence of the social and environmental costs that allows such an articulation and underlies the growth of the green movement.

Tester's (1991) analysis of animal rights discourse provides an example of the way in which the objective basis of environmentalism in problems in the environment can be sociologized away by an attempt to explain it in terms of its social causes. Tester's book novel in the animal rights literature in that it is a historical sociology of animal rights as a discourse rather than an argument within animal rights philosophy itself. In sociology it is novel in paying attention to the non-human world. Its problem is that it does so by focusing on human discourses about that world, denying the content of those discourses and reducing them to their social function.

Tester's argument is that animal rights is all about humans rather than animals. He proposes that animal rights discourses give rights to animals on the basis that they have a common sentient or organic structure to humans or are of equal value to us or members of same community. Yet it sets up humans as the agents of moral concern and animals as the objects of it. In this way animal rights, far from being about animals, functions to establish humans' distance and distinctiveness from them. It is about humans defining themselves as superior and moral beings.

Tester stretches social constructionism too far here, reducing animal rights to human self-concern and morally relativizing it. He argues that the protagonists of animal rights are concerned more with self-hood and human perfectionism than animals. Their theories are about some humans defining themselves as different as moral agents from non-moral humans and from the objects of their concern, animals. Yet in the determination to lay out the *functions* of animal rights for *humans* here Tester sociologizes away the concern for *animals* its *content*. He denies the stated and objective basis for moral concern.



Furthermore, Tester argues that modern animal rights discourses involve *different* rather than *better* classifications of animals to those previously existing. However, the jump from historical relativity here to epistemological and ethical relativism is too big. Modern classifications of animals can be a historical and social product but still be more sensitive to the objective sentient experiences of animals than previous classifications and so amenable to a superior ethical attitude to them. Tester slips from history to ethics here and once again in locating animal rights in social classifications misses out its basis in the objective experience of animals. Animal rights is certainly a product of how we think about animals but this is in part related to the experience that animals objectively have and not just a product of mental or social constructs. Sociology has the chance in its encounters with the non-human world to be more naturalistic and objectivist and less socially reductionist in its understandings. Tester misses the chance here. I return to his analysis in chapter 6.

One suggestion is that environmental concern is a response to the experience of loss of control over our surroundings as a result of new ecological difficulties which cannot be solved through normal processes of problem solving. There is an objective and natural basis to environmental concern (Lowe and Rudig 1986:517). In a review of the sociological literature on environmentalism, Lowe and Rudig are worried about the tendency of sociological explanations to divorce environmental concern from ecological problems (p. 518). Environmental concern is too often seen as resulting from a shift in values related to social rather than environmental causes, as a social symptom or pathology rather than a response to the problems it identifies itself. For Lowe and Rudig 'the relation between environmental problems and environmental attitudes is ... one of the major research topics which has not been adequately addressed.' They argue for more studies of local responses to problems. Social scientists show 'an ignorance of, or an unwillingness to consider the role of environmental problems and the particular way in which they have been perceived and politicised in different countries' (p. 536).

Sociological analysis should incorporate natural environmental factors in order to get a full and complete understanding of the rise of the green movement:

'the stimuli for environmental action and their causes should be analysed. There would be no environmental problems and no green parties without the existence of environmental problems. This rather trivial point seems to have been forgotten in the literature. (p. 536)

Beck (1992) and Giddens (1990 and 1991) talk about modern societies as characterized by global risks and ecological degradation. We rely on science to understand environmental problems yet are increasingly sceptical about it and see it as part of the problem. The enormity of the risk and its inaccessibility to general understanding lead to anxiety and insecurity. Ecological anxiety is, in short, linked through the mediation of science to objective global risks and environmental problems themselves.

Jehlcka (1992) cites attitude surveys which suggest that it is general concern rather than NIMBY (not in my back yard) self-interest which is at the root of environmental anxiety (see Rudig et al. 1991). But he agrees that environmentalism is as much a response to environmental problems as a social pathology. He cites variability in explanations for green concern in different countries noting that concern for the environment is the only common denominator. Beyond Germany, post-materialist values are less prevalent and environmental concern more of a response to ecological conditions (1992:7). He suggests that the British are less concerned about global environmental problem because acid rain and river pollution are less prevalent in Britain than elsewhere. Countries in Western Europe where air pollution, acidification, deforestation, soil erosion and river pollution are most serious - southern Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, northern France and Switzerland - are where mature (globally concerned rather than self-interested)

environmental concern is most developed (pp 11, 18). Environmentalism is more moderate and absorbed into mainstream politics in areas like Britain and Scandinavia where, among other things, environmental deterioration is less marked. In the Czech Republic, he argues, environmental problems and votes for the green party are linked. The most environmentally affected areas record the highest votes for the greens (pp. 15-16; Jehlicka and Kostecky 1991).

All of this suggests that even in a traditional area of sociological analysis - the study of the bases of political values and movement, full and complete understanding requires the inclusion of natural environmental factors and society-nature interactions within the sociological rubric.

### **Explaining the green movement**

Some of the discussion so far has suggested that there are locally or nationally specific explanations for differences in the preponderance of green values and Politics. The degree of environmental concern, support for green parties and green party success varies. This is surprising as there is variation in many of the conditions which lie at the basis of environmental concern and green politics: political closure or openness, environmental group activism and the existence of environmental problems themselves, for example. Assuming a comparative framework, there are a number of possible explanations for environmental concern and political activity. The first four correspond respectively to the political, action, cultural and structural frames for the general analysis of social movement formation which I outlined in table 4.1 The last adds a fifth category of explanation based on objective environmental problems themselves.

*1 Openness or closure of political institutions.* Political institutions which are more open to environmental lobbying may incorporate environmental concern into mainstream politics and disarm green social movement activity. Corporatist closure, on the other hand, may exclude environmental concern and so contribute to its channeling into radical and oppositional social movement action. Some forms of electoral system - PR party lists, for example - make it easier for green parties to get elected and gain prominence and develop. Others - first-past-the-post for instance - are obstructive to green party success. These factors, however, explain the political direction green concern takes. They do not completely explain why it arises in the first place. For this other explanations need to be included.

*2 Environmental groups, media and science.* The role of environmental groups mobilizing resources and pursuing political change and publicity effectively is important to the acceptance of environmental degradation as a problem on the public agenda. Their adaptability to the media and the interest of the media in the environment as newsworthy as well as the work of scientists in identifying environmental problems, their causes and solutions are also important.

*3 Values.* The preponderance of value dispositions favourable to environmental concern and of economic and social circumstances favourable to such values helps the green case. However, these values are not produced in a vacuum but are located in material social actions and experiences which support and give rise to them. Such material bases might be social and environmental.

*4 The new middle class.* The availability of groups in society with a material existence conducive to concern for post-material and environmental concerns provides a social basis for such concerns. The existence of such groups may not produce environmental concern but can provide a home for it.

*5 Environmental explanations.* Another material basis for environmental concern is in environmental problems themselves. Environmental concern may vary according to the experience environmental problems and no full and complete explanation of the rise of green

values and politics can be adequate without account of the environmental problems they identify in the content of their discourse. Sociology needs to break with anti-naturalism and include natural environmental factors and society-nature interactions if it is to give an adequate account of the rise of environmentalism. Social constructionism, which reduces environmental problems to social symptoms, misses the chance to do this.

How do these categories interact to explain the development of green movements? An explanation of the development of environmentalism needs to go back to material experience. It is on the basis of experience of environmental problems that a concern about them is developed. For it to be developed and popularized requires the identification of such problems (by science) and the successful and effective mobilisation of resources (by environmental groups) in pursuit of environmental concern. Such groups and values form and develop within a particular social, economic, political and cultural context. The availability of social groups with a material existence conducive to environmental concern and of propitious economic conditions and value concerns affect the degree of receptivity to green values. Environmental concerns also develop within the context of sets of power relations. The closure or openness of political parties and institutions, example, may affect the direction in which environmental concern is channelled politically.

I have looked in the previous chapter and this one at the philosophical bases of environmentalism and reasons for its rise in popularity. I will look in the next couple of chapters at the implications of environmentalism for traditional political and social theory.

#### *Guide to further reading*

Lowe and Rudig are leading environmental sociologists and their trend report on 'Political Ecology and the Social Sciences' (1986) provides a useful review of the literature. They are critical of post-materialist explanations and stress the importance of political, comparative and environmental factors. Stephen Cotgrove's *Catastrophe or Cornucopia* (1982) covers many explanations including post-materialism and the middle-class issue. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of Yearley's *The Green Case* (1991) take a social problems approach to the role of green groups and the media in popularizing environmentalism but question the role of science. Eyerman and Jamison provide an 'action' explanation in their *Social Movements: A Cognitive Approach* (1991). This book arose out of the Jamison et al.'s comparative study *The Making of the New Environmental Consciousness* (1990). Chapter 5 of Crook et al.'s *Postmodernization* (1992) accessibly and succinctly analyses the rise of social movements and new politics from a point of view influenced by postmodern ideas about shifts in the structures of late capitalist societies. Alan Scott's *Ideology and the New Social Movements* (1990) provides a 'political' explanation which plays down the newness of the new social movements and tends to give succour to 'realists' rather than 'fundamentalists' in the green movement.