

Green Culture

An A-to-Z Guide



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Green Society
Toward a Sustainable Future



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and moral considerations. The topic of animals in society has become a subject of study in university departments, and attracts interest from a wide variety of academics and professionals in a wide range of fields, such as lawyers, physicians, psychologists, and veterinarians.

The animal rights movement emerged in the 1970s; this worldwide social movement aims to eliminate the use of animals as human property. It includes philosophical debate as well as direct action. Animal rights advocacy is wide ranging, including animal rights organizations and activists. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) is the largest animal rights group in the world. Most groups engage in peaceful education and research, but a minority use direct action such as violence and criminal activities. Some have been classified as domestic terrorist organizations in both the UK and the United States.

There have been advances in the animal welfare perspective. Animal welfare science is the study of animal consciousness and emotions and scientific approaches to assessing and improving welfare. Tremendous progress has been made in the past 30 years to understand the cause and prevention of animal suffering. Although still a relatively young discipline, animal welfare science has multidisciplinary links with biology and a related fields, such as animal behavior, behavioral ecology, evolution, genetics, physiology, neuroscience, cognitive science, etc., and draws upon the latest techniques and methods. Animal welfare in practice includes animal welfare organizations such as the Humane Society International, Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and the World Society for the Protection of Animals.

See Also: "Agri-Culture"; Biodiversity Loss/Species Extinction; Fish; Organic Foods; Permaculture.

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ANTIGLOBALIZATION MOVEMENT

The anticorporate globalization or global justice movement represents one of the most significant expressions of grassroots mobilization and popular dissent of the past two decades. In response to growing corporate power and the free market, or neoliberal policies of governments and global institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO), workers, students, environmentalists, youths, peasants, indigenous peoples, and the urban poor have come

together across the north-south divide to strive for social, economic, and ecological justice and democratic control over their daily lives. The movement addresses the harmful consequences of corporate or neoliberal globalization, including poverty, inequality, social dislocation, hunger, and ecological destruction. Global justice activists come from diverse spheres, including environmental and human rights organizations, political parties, trade unions, grassroots struggles, and informal collectives, and have combined multiple forms of action, including direct action, marches and rallies, public education, and lobbying.

Corporate Globalization and the Environment

Since the 1980s, governments and multilateral institutions have implemented free market policies such as privatization, trade liberalization, deregulation, export-oriented production, and cuts in social spending and basic subsidies. Although some populations have benefited, the results have been disastrous for many others, particularly in the global south. During the 1990s, the number of people living in poverty around the globe increased by 100 million, even as world income grew 2.5 percent per year, and more than 80 countries had per capita incomes lower than the decade before.

Environmentalists have denounced the ecologically destructive impacts of globalization. Some have emphasized the specific neoliberal policies of governments and global institutions that promote export production, free trade, and urban growth, threaten ecosystems, deplete natural resources such as forests and water, and increase pollution and the burning of fossil fuels that cause global warming. The WTO, in particular, has been singled out for its decisions that favor free trade and corporate profit over national environmental laws that protect wildlife, clean air and water, and public health. Others have voiced a more radical critique of globalization and its unsustainable model of capitalist growth that is provoking a rapid loss of biodiversity, fast exhausting the planet's resources, and generating a global climate catastrophe. Whereas moderates seek a global regime of environmental laws and regulations, including multilateral treaties that would curb the emissions of fossil fuels, many radicals question the entire global system, calling for a return to small-scale, locally sustainable economies, communities, and ecologies.

Green Roots of the Global Justice Movement

Given the grave ecological consequences of corporate globalization, environmentalists, indigenous peoples, and farmers have led a massive wave of resistance over the past few decades. Indigenous communities and peasant farmers, largely in the south, have struggled against the decimation of their land, communities, and environment due to free trade agreements and corporate exploitation of their territories through mining, oil, and other resource extraction projects. Meanwhile, northern environmentalists have organized against neoliberal policies that threaten local and global ecosystems and have worked to preserve green spaces, wilderness, and wildlife in their own communities. Some of the earliest critiques of corporate globalization came from radical environmental organizations and networks such as Earth First!, Reclaim the Streets, the Rainforest Action Network, Greenpeace, and the Ecologist, while environmental direct action organizers played a key role in the anti-WTO protests in Seattle on November 30, 1999.

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During the years leading up to the Seattle protests, environmentalists began building alliances and networks with other sectors, including labor movements, human rights and economic justice organizations, anti-free trade and anti-debt campaigners, Zapatista solidarity activists, squatters, and antisweatshop activists, as well as southern peasant and indigenous movements. Coming on the heels of the Zapatista Gatherings against neoliberalism and for Humanity in Chiapas and Spain in 1996–97, activists founded the Peoples' Global Action Network in 1998, which inspired the first global days of action against capitalism, including the high-profile Seattle protest. Counter-summit actions soon spread around the world, including blockades against the World Bank/IMF meetings in Prague in September 2000 and the Free Trade Area of the Americas Summit in Quebec City in April 2001. Protests reached an explosive crescendo with the violent clashes in Gothenburg, Barcelona, and Genoa in summer 2001. Since then, movement focus has shifted to world and regional social forums, where thousands have gathered in cities such as Porto Alegre, Mumbai, Dakar, Caracas, London, and Atlanta to discuss alternatives to corporate globalization.

Decentralized Networking

In addition to emphasizing ecological issues, radical environmentalists have also brought to the movement their political culture revolving around a critique of hierarchy, an affinity for direct democracy, and a commitment to decentralized network forms. The consensus decision making and horizontal networking that characterize the wider movement, and which have been reinforced by the use of digital technologies and the underlying logic of late capitalism, have been practiced for many years by radical direct action activists within networks such as Earth First! and Reclaim the Streets, and the U.S.-based antinuclear power movement.

The global justice movement today is primarily organized around flexible, decentralized networks, such as the former Direct Action Network in North America, the Movement for Global Resistance in Barcelona, or Peoples' Global Action at the transnational scale. Although global justice activists are critical of hierarchy and centralization, they are not opposed to organization, leadership, or strategy per se. Instead, they are trying to build participatory structures that reflect their directly democratic ideals. At the same time, given the new technologies at their disposal, antiglobalization activists have been able to build networks beyond the local scale. In contrast to traditional parties and unions, global justice movements involve broad umbrella spaces, where diverse organizations, networks, and collectives converge around common hallmarks while preserving their autonomy and specificity. Such grassroots forms of political participation are widely seen as an alternative mode of democratic practice. Global justice movements thus promote global democracy, even as they emphasize autonomy and local self-management.

Direct Action Tactics

Radical environmentalists have also contributed their knowledge and experience with direct action. The mass action strategy, involving horizontal coordination among autonomous affinity groups and consensus decision making, comes out of the U.S.-based direct action wings of antinuclear, ecology, peace, gay rights, and Central America solidarity

movements beginning in the 1970s. Many specific tactics, including lockdown, road occupation, and banner hang techniques, were first developed in the radical ecology movement, particularly Earth First! in the United States and the United Kingdom. The latter also gave rise to Reclaim the Streets and its mobile street parties. Finally, militant direct action, including White Overall and confrontational Black Bloc tactics, are rooted in Italian and German autonomous movements, which also included radical ecologists.

Despite arising in distinct contexts, the tactics employed by antiglobalization activists all produce theatrical images for mass media consumption, building on the tradition of organizing direct actions as “image events” developed by environmental organizations such as Greenpeace. Beyond their utilitarian goals—shutting down summit meetings—mass actions are complex cultural performances that allow participants to communicate symbolic messages while providing a forum for producing and experiencing symbolic meaning through ritual interaction. The theatrical performances staged by activists from diverse global justice networks, including giant puppets and street theater, mobile carnivals (Reclaim the Streets); spectacular protests involving white outfits, protective shields, and padding (White Overalls); and militant attacks against the symbols of corporate capitalism (Black Bloc), are designed to capture mass media attention while also embodying and expressing alternative political identities.

Conclusion and Future Directions

Despite their differences, antiglobalization activists from diverse sectors are all struggling for social and economic justice and ecological sustainability. What makes the movement unique is its capacity for coordinating across vast distances and high levels of diversity and difference, overcoming many political and geographic obstacles that have plagued past mass movements. Environmental activists and issues have long been an important focus of global justice activism, but with the recent direct action protests against the Global Climate Summit in Copenhagen in December 2009, climate change and environmental justice have been thrust once again to the forefront of the movement’s agenda. It remains to be seen, however, whether the movement will be able to translate its innovative tactics and forms into concrete policy victories.

See Also: Antiwar Actions/Movement; Benjamin, Medea; Chipko Movement; Cyber Action; Demonstrations and Events; Environmental Justice Movements.

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