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Historical Dictionary of Environmentalism

Peter Dauvergne

*Historical Dictionaries of Religions,
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Introduction

The history of environmentalism is woven into the history of global ecological change. Before the 1960s, the word *environment*, in the relatively rare instances when it appeared in print, referred primarily to the home or work environment, not to nature, ecosystems, or the earth. Efforts to balance human societies with nature's capacity to adapt certainly has a much longer history than the more modern meaning of the word *environment*, extending back to when nomadic hunters and gatherers were allowing animals and plants to regenerate, settled indigenous communities were developing cultural practices of living *within* nature, and ancient Greek and Roman philosophers were reflecting on the consequences of different political and social orders for the natural world. By the time of at least the 17th century, various scholars and state officials were already calling for greater efforts to preserve, conserve, and manage natural systems. By the 19th and early 20th centuries, as consumption of natural resources began to rise alongside industrial production and growing populations, more and more governments, including some colonizers, began to implement "scientific" management of resources (such as sustained yield management for timber) to try to ensure more efficient use of natural resources and lessen unnecessary degradation and unwanted consequences (such as soil erosion and flooding). Some governments, writers, and ordinary citizens began to worry, too, about the quality of air and unsanitary conditions in industrializing cities. Many began to advocate for measures to preserve the "countryside" and "nature" by, for example, establishing national parks to preserve scenic beauty or species for viewing (e.g., birds) or hunting (e.g., bears) in natural settings.

Still, the word *environment* only began to take on its more modern political, social, ecological, and global meaning during the 1960s and early 1970s, as public demands for cleaner and safer living conditions became

more vocal, as newly formed nongovernmental groups began to lobby governments and campaign to influence consumers and corporations, and as global-scale problems began to move up national and international political agendas. Today, the concept of “the environment” is highly political, with definitions varying across and within societies. Some see the word *environment* as shorthand for *natural ecosystem*—for rainforests, oceans, deserts, and wetlands, as well as the atmosphere, climate, and ozone layer. For them, protecting the global environment is about protecting the earth itself *from* growing numbers of people. For others, the word *environment* includes, or is more about, the living spaces for humans: the air in towns and cities, the garbage in streets, the rats and disease in dirty cities, the sewage in canals and oceans, and the industrial poisons in wells and lakes. Thus, “managing” the environment is more about making the spaces where people reside cleaner, safer, and more pleasant; preserving “natural” beauty for hikers and birdwatchers; and ensuring efficient economic growth and sufficient resources for future generations.

The understanding of *environmentalism* is even more contested. Most would agree the “ism” connotes a movement advocating for change to reduce the impact of humans on the environment (with its multiple definitions). But who are the legitimate *environmentalists*? Most would agree that ideas like “sustainable development” and the “precautionary principle”—as well as knowledge of the causes and consequences of escalating problems (deforestation, desertification, biodiversity loss, ozone depletion, climate change)—infuse environmentalism with beliefs and values, shaping arguments and prescriptions. And most, too, would agree that an environmentalist, by definition, believes environmental problems are real and that some action is necessary (or, at least, potentially beneficial).

But what action? Here, little consensus exists among environmentalists on the best path forward. Some stress the need for better science and technologies, more trade, and more investment to reduce poverty and ensure more efficient production and distribution of environmental resources. Others emphasize the need for stronger international laws and state regulations. Still others stress the need to reform the globalizing capitalist world order to eliminate South-North inequalities, foreign debts, and exploitative multinational corporations. And still others see the only way for lasting change to occur is to shift global consciousness to alter lifestyles, reduce human populations, and decrease consumption.

To capture this diversity within environmentalism, this dictionary takes a global tack with a focus on ideas, events, institutions, initiatives, and green movements since the 1960s. It strives to avoid a common error in many histories of environmentalism: to exaggerate the input of the wealthy countries of Europe and North America and understate the influence of Africa, Asia, South and Central America, Eastern Europe, and the polar regions. It aims as well for a more comprehensive analysis than most histories of the modern environmental movement, understanding environmentalism as emerging not only from grassroots and formal nongovernmental associations, but also from corporate, governmental, and intergovernmental organizations and initiatives. This assumes the ideas and energy infusing environmentalism with political purpose arise from hundreds of thousands of sources: from corporate boardrooms to bureaucratic policies to international negotiations to activists. Thus, environmentalists are not only indigenous people blocking a logging road, Greenpeace activists protesting a seal hunt, or green candidates contesting an election; an equal or larger number of environmentalists are working within the Japanese bureaucracy to implement environmental policies, within the World Bank to assess the environmental impacts of loans, within Wal-Mart to green its purchasing practices, or within intergovernmental forums to negotiate international environmental agreements.

Understanding environmentalism in this way reveals that, unlike in the 1960s, as a movement it is no longer on the political fringes but is now a driving global force reforming state policies, international law, business practices, and community life everywhere. To chart the contours of this powerful movement, and to provide necessary background for the dictionary entries, this introduction divides environmentalism into four categories that, although overlapping slightly, are in significant ways distinctive: scholarly environmentalism, governmental environmentalism, nongovernmental environmentalism, and commercial environmentalism.

SCHOLARLY ENVIRONMENTALISM

Environmentalism, more so than in the case of other social and political movements, can suddenly shift and reorient in unexpected directions

following groundbreaking scientific research or new ways of understanding from the social sciences and humanities. Other new ideas have taken root following a bestselling book or popular essay. One of the most influential essays in the intellectual history of environmentalism goes back to 1798 when Thomas Malthus published the first edition of *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, which predicted that a worldwide famine would one day ensue because population, left unchecked, rises exponentially while food production can only increase arithmetically. One of the most influential books was Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), which many people believe ushered in modern environmentalism by raising American (and over time global) consciousness of the environmental dangers of chemicals such as dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT). But many other books and essays have shaped environmentalism, too.

Before Carson, books such as Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* (1949) were influencing the emerging environmental movement in the United States. Numerous bestselling books and popular articles would also follow Carson's *Silent Spring*, with many of the authors inspired by a belief that environmentalists must reach a global audience to bring about necessary reforms. One particularly influential book from the late 1960s was Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* (1968), with its metaphor of the earth bombed by an exploding human population, leaving it no longer able to feed the starving survivors. One of the most cited academic articles of all time came out in the same year: Garrett Hardin's article, "The Tragedy of the Commons," which sees the history of access and collapse of the English commons as an analogy to access and collapse of shared environments in modern times. The idea of a global environment began to emerge around this time as well, reinforced as astronauts took stunning pictures of a fragile and borderless earth from space, an image that soon became a symbol of global environmentalism (and common on book covers). This image also reinforced a growing sense in both the First and Third Worlds of mutual vulnerability of increasingly entwined economies and ecosystems.

Three especially influential books in the 1970s were *The Limits to Growth* (1972) by Donella Meadows, Dennis Meadows, Jørgen Randers, and William Behrens III; *Small Is Beautiful* (1973) by E. F. Schumacher; and *Steady-State Economics* (1977) by Herman Daly. *The Limits to Growth*, using groundbreaking computer simulations to argue that

economies would one day crash into the earth's finite resources, convinced many people to question the value of unrestrained economic growth. *Small Is Beautiful* took these critiques further and proposed reforming the global economy to decentralize and democratize decision making and ensure appropriate technology scaled for a quality community life. *Steady-State Economics* added further to a growing vision among some environmentalists about how to manage economic life sustainably, and became a foundational text for the emerging field of ecological economics.

Some influential books were also written by politicians, such as Petra Kelly's *Fighting for Hope* (1984) (she was one of the founders of the West German Green Party). Other influential books and articles came out of governmental forums. The World Commission on Environment and Development, set up by the United Nations in 1983 to develop ideas for bringing together the goals of development with the values of environmentalism, published a report in 1987 called *Our Common Future* that included a definition of sustainable development that to this day continues to guide most governments and many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs): "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Although rarer, corporate leaders have also authored influential books, such as *Changing Course* (1992) by Swiss industrialist Stephan Schmidheiny, who founded the Business Council for Sustainable Development (BCSD) in 1991. More common is for books to receive a significant boost in publicity as business leaders praise it. One example is economist Julian Simon's *The Ultimate Resource* (1981). Another is journalist Gregg Easterbrook's bestseller *A Moment on the Earth* (1995). An even more dramatic example is the bestselling translation of Danish political scientist's Bjørn Lomborg's *The Skeptical Environmentalist* (2001), a Cambridge University Press book with more than 3,000 footnotes. Bestselling books critical of environmentalism, however, remain much less common than ones about the global environmental "crisis" or ones calling for global reforms to "save" the planet from humanity. The list of influential books in this category is long: three examples are Herman Daly's *Beyond Growth* (1996), Jared Diamond's *Collapse* (2005), and Bill McKibbin's *Deep Economy* (2007). A few environmental movies, too, have been highly influential in shaping

public debates and global consciousness: one of the best known is Al Gore's documentary film *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), which won two Academy Awards and was one of the reasons Gore won the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize.

GOVERNMENTAL ENVIRONMENTALISM

Collective efforts to control nature started in earnest 8,000 to 15,000 years ago as nomadic hunters and gatherers began turning to settled agriculture. Large civilizations emerged as inventions like the animal-drawn plow, the wheel, numbers, and writing began to change political and social life. Often, these same civilizations began to clear forests, degrade land, and pollute local waters. Environmental collapse even toppled a few great civilizations, such as Mesopotamia (a land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, part of contemporary Iraq), where a badly designed irrigation system slowly poisoned the land with salt. Until some 200–300 years ago, however, environmental problems were primarily local; only with the industrial revolution did human activities start to cause noticeable regional and global environmental damage.

One reason for the increasing global damage was the rise in the production and the burning of fossil fuels (such as coal). Another was the growing global population, which jumped from 1 billion people in the early 1800s to over 2 billion by the end of the 1920s. A third reason was the rising consumption of natural resources from places far from producers and consumers (with colonial administrations often facilitating this "trade"). The evidence of severe damage was already clear by the late 19th and early 20th centuries. On some days smog in cities like London and New York became thick enough to kill. Once abundant species, such as the Plains bison of North America, were brought to near extinction; a few, such as the passenger pigeon, even went extinct (in 1914). By then, some governments were starting to respond by passing new national and regional policies to promote conservation of wildlife and better resource management. Canada and the United States, for example, signed the Migratory Birds Treaty in 1918.

State environmentalism began to take off after the late 1960s, however, as more and more people (especially in wealthy countries) began to demand better living conditions and as "global" environmental prob-

lems began to emerge. By the beginning of the 1970s various governments were establishing environmental departments and agencies. The United States, for example, created the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1970. The following year Canada set up its Department of the Environment and France established its Environment Ministry. A year later Singapore established a Ministry of the Environment. By this time many governments were also putting together negotiating teams to participate in international environmental negotiations. One outcome was the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in June 1972 in Stockholm, Sweden.

The Stockholm conference was the first international United Nations conference for state officials on the environment and a sign of the growing importance of environmentalism for governments worldwide. The only heads of state to attend were Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme and Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi; still, the turnout was impressive, with about 1,200 delegates from over a hundred countries attending (although, disappointedly for the organizers, Russia and the Communist bloc countries boycotted the conference to protest the exclusion of East Germany). The conference revealed, however, some fundamental differences in how governmental environmentalism was emerging in developed and developing countries. Delegates from wealthier states tended to stress issues such as industrial pollution, nature conservation, and population growth. Delegates from poorer states tended to stress the need for development, arguing rich conservationists should not deny the world's poor the benefits of economic growth. Sharp differences emerged as well over who was responsible for solving (and thus financing the solutions to) global environmental problems. Many delegates from the Third World saw global capitalism as a cause of poverty and a core reason for the pressures on natural environments, especially with global economic institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund pressuring developing countries to export natural resources on declining terms of trade. These delegates coined the phrase *the pollution of poverty* to express the idea that the greatest global environmental threat was in fact poverty and that the only solution for poverty was international economic reforms.

In the end, the official conference documents—the nonbinding Declaration on the Human Environment (with 26 principles), the Action Plan for the Human Environment (with 109 recommendations), and the

Resolution on Institutional and Financial Arrangements—did not stress these calls to reform the global economy. The conference did, however, raise the profile of global environmental issues within states as well as reveal the complexity and diversity of worldviews about the causes and consequences of global environmental change. It also led to the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), officially launched in 1973 with its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, and with Canada's Maurice Strong as the first executive director. It was not designed as a strong institution—more a coordinating program than a specialized agency with a significant budget. Both the First and Third Worlds supported this. The First World did not want to fund a large institution; the Third World did not want an institution able to interfere with development goals.

After the Stockholm Conference, rising oil prices in 1973–1974 rocked the global economy: inflation soared, economic growth slowed, and foreign debt increased in many Third World countries, particularly in Latin America and Africa. Such turbulence deflated some of the more ambitious environmental plans after Stockholm, especially in countries with heavy debts and weak economies. Still, governmental environmentalism continued to strengthen. In 1973 the United States passed the Endangered Species Act and Bangladesh enacted the Wild Life (Preservation) Order. In 1974 Germany set up its federal Environment Agency and Mexico hosted a symposium on development and environment in Cocoyoc, formulating some of the earliest conceptions of sustainable development. Just after Stockholm, states also signed some noteworthy international environmental treaties, including the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (the London Convention of 1972, which entered into force in 1975), and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES, 1973, which entered into force in 1975).

In the second half of the 1970s and first half of the 1980s, conservative governments more hostile to environmentalism came to power in the United States and Great Britain, and many developing economies fell further into debt. Nevertheless, governmental environmentalism was continuing to strengthen, partly because of advances in scientific understanding (such as the dangers of chlorofluorocarbons [CFCs] for the ozone layer and the link to skin cancer), partly because of disasters such as the 1979 U.S. nuclear accident at Three Mile Island and the

1984 Union Carbide chemical leak in Bhopal, India, and partly because of increasing pressure from grassroots and nongovernmental environmentalism (and thus, in democracies, pressure from voters). More and more states established environmental agencies, including increasingly in the developing world (for example, Bangladesh established its Department of Environment in 1977 and Taiwan created its Environmental Protection Bureau in 1979). States also continued to sign and ratify international environmental agreements, such as the 1979 Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (which entered into force in 1983), the 1979 Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (which entered into force in 1983), and the 1980 Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (which entered into force in 1982).

Global environmental issues began to move up the list of government priorities in the second half of the 1980s. States continued to negotiate and sign international environmental treaties, including the 1985 Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer, and the 1989 Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal. By the end of the 1980s, the debate was centering on the concept of sustainable development, drawing on the definition from the 1987 report by the World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future*.

This report, commonly called the Brundtland report after its chair Gro Harlem Brundtland, was an ingenious compromise between those wanting more development and those wanting more environmental protection. It did not assume any necessary limits to growth, and it saw industrialization and natural resource production, under correct management, as suitable, even essential, for some countries. The report saw poverty as a core cause of unsustainable development. Thus, the only way forward was to stimulate—not slow—economic growth, although not the unchecked growth of the 1960s and 1970s but growth arising from sustainable development. It called for developed countries to transfer more environmental technologies and economic assistance to the Third World. It also recommended better education and food security as well as more controls on population growth.

The growing consensus around the Brundtland concept of sustainable development culminated in a 1989 United Nations General Assembly

resolution to hold the first summit of world leaders on the global environment: what became the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Popularly called the Rio or Earth Summit, this was the largest conference ever held by the United Nations, with 117 heads of state participating and 178 national delegations. The official conference also included thousands of NGO representatives; thousands more also attended a parallel NGO forum. Most state delegates endorsed the Brundtland definition of sustainable development, although many from developing countries also called for far more economic assistance and technology transfers from the First World to balance the additional costs of green growth.

The Rio Summit reinforced the view among state leaders that more economic growth was necessary for a healthy global environment. It produced several important consensus documents: the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (a set of 27 principles on the rights and responsibilities of states for environment and development), and Agenda 21 (a 300-page action program to promote sustainable development). It also produced the Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests, as well as opened two conventions for signature: the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The decade after the Rio Summit saw environmental issues again slide down the list of state priorities as threats of terrorism, chemical and biological warfare, and a financial crisis in Asia took center stage. State negotiators nevertheless kept signing and ratifying environmental treaties. The Convention on Biological Diversity entered into force in 1993. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, first opened for signature in 1982, entered into force in 1994. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa was opened for signature in 1994 (and entered into force in 1996). The Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was opened for signature in 1998. And the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) was opened for signature in 2001. State negotiators also continued to review the progress of

Agenda 21 and the implementation of sustainable development, including a 1997 special session of the United Nations General Assembly (commonly called the Earth Summit +5) that paved the way for the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The Johannesburg Summit, also called Rio +10, was designed to evaluate the progress toward sustainable development, establish mechanisms to implement the Rio goal, and develop a global strategy to reach the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals. Global environmental change was no longer at the top of global agenda (the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on 11 September 2001 profoundly changed foreign policy priorities worldwide). Still, the Johannesburg Summit was a landmark event reaffirming the importance of governmental environmentalism: although fewer heads of state attended (about 100) than in the case of the Rio Summit, overall the conference was even larger than Rio, with more than 10,000 delegates from more than 180 countries; at least 8,000 civil society representatives; and about 4,000 members of the press. The official documents from the Johannesburg Summit were similar to the Rio Summit in terms of their broad support for sustainable development. The two most significant ones were the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development, a list of nonbinding challenges and commitments, and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Like the Rio Summit, the Johannesburg Summit added yet another layer to environmentalism. It further raised the profile of environmental issues among world leaders and within state bureaucracies. It cemented sustainable development as the core organizing concept for governmental environmentalism. And it brought many nongovernmental organizations and community groups into partnerships with business and governments to implement policies to promote sustainable development.

NONGOVERNMENTAL ENVIRONMENTALISM

Among ordinary citizens, concern over deteriorating local and global environmental conditions began to increase in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Symbolic of this was the first Earth Day in April 1970, which saw some 20 million people rally at one of the largest organized demon-

strations ever held in the United States. At the same time more and more environmental activists were creating national and transnational organizations to lobby governments and corporations and rally public support. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF, later the World Wide Fund for Nature), which started in 1961 with fundraising headquarters in Switzerland, was evolving into an international network of national offices. By the early 1970s it had already established a US\$10 million trust fund to cover administrative expenses. Greenpeace was also beginning to take shape after a group of activists set sail in 1971 from Vancouver for Amchitka, an island off Alaska, to "bear witness" to U.S. nuclear testing. The same year four groups—from England, France, Sweden, and the United States—founded Friends of the Earth International to coordinate environmental campaigns.

Over the next decade networks of environmental activism began to deepen. Greenpeace, for example, evolved into a multinational enterprise as more than 20 groups in North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand adopted the name Greenpeace. In 1979 the Canadian Greenpeace Foundation, facing financial and organizational difficulties, agreed to create a new international organization called Greenpeace International (with its headquarters in Amsterdam). By the 1980s this new structure was allowing Greenpeace to coordinate campaigns and fundraising in ways not unlike the advertising and sales strategies of a multinational corporation. Some Greenpeace activists stole a page from advertisers, using daring stunts to reach front pages and primetime, repeating messages and images to embed new meanings and emotions into the public psyche. There were many successes. For example, whales became "majestic" and seals "cuddly," and whaling and sealing were recast in the minds of many people as senseless slaughters.

Friends of the Earth International (FOEI) was continuing to grow and evolve over this time as well. In the second half the 1970s, the number of national offices in the federation increased (primarily in developed countries). Such expansion began to necessitate more organizational capacity. The federation decided to set up a small international secretariat in 1981 (rotating from country to country) to assist with coordinating and running the increasingly large annual meetings. Two years later the number of groups in the federation reached 25—and the members decided to elect an executive committee to oversee the issues dealt with at the annual meetings. Two years after this the European members de-

cided to create the first regional coordinating office in Brussels. The number of national offices in the federation was continuing to grow, with more joining through the 1980s from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The first Eastern European member—Poland's *Polski Klub Ekologiczny*—joined in 1985. A year later the number of members was at 31—and for the first time a national office in the developing world hosted the annual meeting (Sahabat Alam Malaysia, or Friends of the Earth Malaysia). The mandate was expanding with more national offices from developing countries, and by the mid-1980s FOEI was campaigning to protect tropical rainforests and indigenous forest dwellers.

The increase in the number of WWF projects and campaigns is yet another typical example of the growth of many nongovernmental environmental organizations from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s. In 1973 the WWF launched Project Tiger (with the Indian government) to try to save India's endangered tigers. Its first worldwide tropical rainforest campaign—covering Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia—began two years later. In 1976 the WWF launched an ambitious marine campaign—called *The Seas Must Live*—to establish sanctuaries for dolphins, seals, turtles, and whales. The WWF was focusing more as well on monitoring and strengthening controls on trade in animals and plants (including ivory and rhino horn). It cooperated with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to create a new organization in 1976 called TRAFFIC (Trade Records Analysis of Fauna and Flora in Commerce). The end of the decade saw the WWF raise over US\$1 million in a campaign to “Save the Rhino” from poachers.

By then the WWF was a truly international institution with a mandate well beyond its original focus on endangered species and habitat loss—one that many within the organization now felt required more cooperation with governments to integrate conservation into development strategies. The WWF was also emerging as an actor in more formal international structures—for example, cooperating with the IUCN and the UNEP to launch in 1980 a World Conservation Strategy endorsed by the United Nations. Meanwhile, its number of regular supporters was continuing to grow—sitting at about 1 million by the early 1980s.

Since the 1980s the capacity of environmental activists to influence governments, public attitudes, and corporations has continued to expand. Today, thousands of groups—big and small—form networks advocating for change. These can include celebrity consumer advocates

like Ralph Nader. They can include innovative NGOs like Adbusters that practice “culture jamming,” running spoof ads and counter-ads to encourage people to *not* consume. They can include grassroots movements like the Green Belt Movement in Kenya, which under the leadership of Wangari Maathai (winner of the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize) was able to plant some 30 million trees in Africa. And they can include local groups of just a couple of people working to protect a patch of land in a village. A few environmental groups, however—ones like Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, and the WWF—now sit as big multinational players in this thicket of diverse environmental voices. Greenpeace International now has millions of contributors and offices in dozens of countries. Friends of the Earth also has millions of members and supporters, with over 70 national groups and over 5,000 local ones. And the WWF now has close to 5 million regular supporters, operating in over 100 countries and funding more than 2,000 conservation projects.

Over the last decade more of these activists have been cooperating with governments to achieve “mutual” goals. For groups like the WWF this strategy has resulted in many successful projects. In recent years, for example, the WWF has been able to assist with establishing millions of hectares of protected forests. This includes, for example, in 2006 convincing Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, and Malaysia to commit to the WWF’s Heart of Borneo initiative to protect the biological diversity of 220,000 square kilometers of forests on the island of Borneo. The WWF has also been cooperating with governments to strengthen environmentalism in local communities as well—such as working with the Malagasy government on an environmental syllabus for primary schools, training locals as wildlife scouts in Zambia, and training gold miners in Suriname. It is collaborating as well with scientists to conduct research—on occasion making original discoveries, such as when a team of WWF divers found a new coral reef off the coast of Thailand in 2006.

The WWF is also partnering with many companies. “The WWF sees a future in which the private sector makes a positive contribution to the well-being of the planet,” explains a website pamphlet called *The Nature of Business*. “To achieve this, WWF engages in challenging and innovative partnerships with business to drive change.” A few examples show the diversity and range of activities. WWF-Sweden has worked with the food company Tetra Pak to establish policies for responsible

wood purchases and to mitigate climate change. WWF-India has worked with the Austrian crystal firm Swarovski to establish a wetlands visitor center in India's Keoladeo National Park. And WWF-Denmark has worked with the pharmaceutical firm Novo Nordisk on a policy to reduce the firm's carbon dioxide emissions. The WWF has also been partnering with many firms on policies to reduce greenhouse gases—including multinationals such as IBM, Johnson & Johnson, Nike, and Polaroid.

NGOs such as the WWF have been especially eager to develop partnerships for eco-labeling programs. Two of the most influential programs are the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). Today, the FSC, founded in 1993 primarily using WWF funds, is the world's most recognizable logo for sustainable forest management, with retailers like Home Depot relying on FSC-certified wood to market sustainable timber. The MSC, founded in 1996 by the WWF and the Unilever food conglomerate, is now the most recognizable international eco-labeling program for sustainable seafood, gaining worldwide publicity in 2006 when Wal-Mart—the world's biggest retailer—pledged to only buy wild seafood from fisheries meeting MSC standards. The partnering of some NGOs with governments and firms does not mean activists are no longer challenging from the periphery of power. If anything, there are more activists than ever before, in part because the Internet allows for a cheap and easy global presence. Still, the trend in recent years has been toward more partnerships and a more commercial focus to all environmentalism.

COMMERCIAL ENVIRONMENTALISM

Corporations in a few sectors, such as forestry, have long histories of working toward "environmental" objectives such as sustainable yields; the purpose, however, was primarily about improving efficiency, reducing waste, and managing long-term risks to profits, not conservation or environmental protection. As governmental and nongovernmental environmentalism was strengthening and spreading during the 1960s and 1970s, most corporations in most sectors tried to block, stall, and counteract environmental regulations and criticisms. Tactics varied across cultures and economic settings, but the core objective—to stop environmentalism from

cutting into profits—was the same. In countries like the United States business executives financed political parties, deployed industry scientists to create uncertainty, lobbied politicians, and sued government departments such as the Environmental Protection Agency. In countries like the Philippines and Indonesia, multinational and local corporations funded military operations, bribed enforcement officers, and gave millions of dollars to politicians and their families.

The corporate approach to the challenges of environmentalism started to change in the 1980s. This was occurring partly because government regulations and civil society pressures were forcing corporations in many countries to alter practices. And it was happening partly because more and more firms began to see opportunities to gain competitive advantages and increase efficiencies by engaging with, rather than opposing, environmentalism. One example is Responsible Care®, which began in 1985 as a voluntary commitment by the chemical industry to improve the health, safety, and environmental performance of chemical operations. By the end of the 1980s, multinational corporations were working toward developing a more constructive role in international environmental negotiations. The willingness of DuPont (the chemical company) to develop substitutes for CFCs, for example, was instrumental in moving along the international agreement to phase out ozone-depleting substances. By 1991, Swiss industrialist Stephan Schmidheiny had founded the Business Council for Sustainable Development to participate more effectively in the upcoming 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, as well as facilitate business efforts to achieve sustainable development and develop a green image.

Since this conference, just about every multinational corporation (MNC) has now created an environment section and put in place internal guidelines to advance sustainable development. Programs similar to Responsible Care® are now common, and their reach is extending. Responsible Care®, for example, is now operating in over 50 countries, with more expected after the International Council of Chemical Associations passed a Responsible Care® Global Charter in 2005 that encourages adoption of national Responsible Care® programs. Together, “corporate environmentalists” advocate a business approach to environmentalism: policies such as eco-efficiency (a business strategy to maximize resource efficiencies and minimize ecological impacts to produce more with less),

market liberalization, industry self-regulation, corporate codes of conduct, and voluntary eco-labeling and certification schemes. They participate in international meetings and “partnerships” with governments, communities, and NGOs (especially with more moderate groups such as WWF). They have also become increasingly active in developing international environmental policy, such as the Kyoto Protocol, advocating for flexible, voluntary, trade- and market-based instruments.

A common business label for this approach to environmentalism is corporate social responsibility—or, what is now commonly called CSR. Often, corporate brochures describe this as meeting a “triple bottom line”: economic, social, and environmental. Such an approach requires companies to be diligent producers, sometimes even going “beyond compliance” with existing environmental regulations (especially in poorer countries with relatively low standards). The phrase *corporate social responsibility* first began to spread in the 1970s and 1980s in response to calls from nongovernmental groups and some states for stricter national and international regulations (including an initiative to develop a United Nations code of conduct) for multinational corporations. In the 1990s CSR began to take hold as a standard policy for MNCs, and today just about every MNC is using the phrase to frame its approach toward, and input into, national and international environmental policy.

Supporters of corporate environmentalism see these contributions as a practical and effective way to advance sustainable development. For some it is a way for MNCs to raise environmental standards in developing countries, such as the policy of the Swedish firm Electrolux to require suppliers and contractors in developing countries to follow its code of conduct. For other supporters it is a way to expand niche eco-markets into profitable global ones. Corporate environmentalism is, they argue, currently encouraging many markets to grow, such as for wind and solar power, organic foods, fair trade coffee, and sustainable timber. For them the case of fair trade coffee is indicative. For decades this was a tiny market prodded along by the energy of international activists and farmers in the developing world; but today it is expanding quickly as big coffee chains like Starbucks purchase more as part of their policies of corporate social responsibility. Another revealing trend for supporters of corporate environmentalism is the growth of forest certification schemes, which now cover hundreds of millions of hectares of forests.

Not everyone is enthusiastic about the growing strength of corporate environmentalism. Critics see many of these initiatives as disingenuous public relations—what some call greenwash—to conceal business as usual: that is, more profits from more production and more consumption, all of which requires more natural resources and generates more waste. Some critics, too, are increasingly worried that corporate environmentalism is undermining the radicalism of grassroots, nongovernmental, and Third World environmentalism as more and more groups and community leaders join corporate partnerships in an effort to achieve concrete changes without disrupting the economic growth arising from corporate investment and trade.

THE FUTURE OF ENVIRONMENTALISM

Environmentalism, then, involves hundreds of international environmental groups, thousands of national groups, and tens of thousands of local ones. It also includes hundreds of international agreements, hundreds of national environmental agencies, and countless environmental sections in other organizations—from ones in MNCs to ones in regional and international organizations. Environmental concepts such as sustainable development, the precautionary principle, corporate social responsibility, and eco-labeling percolate from all of these sources. Every year new ideas, refinements, policies, institutions, markets, and problems continue to enter into environmental debates and discourses—so many from so many different sources one dictionary could not possibly capture all of it. Thus, this book strategically skips across issues, concepts, time, organizations, and cultures, not with any pretense of producing a definitive dictionary, but rather with the aim of producing an inclusive, wide-ranging, and global history of environmentalism.