

John A. Duerk (Ed.). 2021. *Environmental philosophy, politics, and policy*. Rowman & Littlefield. ISBN 978-1-7936-1765-1. Paperback \$39.99.

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In the last century, humanity has commendably documented the extent to which it has breached, or come perilously close to breaching, critical ecological thresholds. Yet, with few exceptions, these efforts have not triggered sufficient political action. Despite rising public awareness of the harm inflicted upon both human and countless non-human species, the growing body of knowledge has failed to inspire what Aldo Leopold termed the Land Ethic—an ethic in which "a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community," and "wrong when it tends otherwise" (Leopold, 1949). Instead, an anthropocentric ethic persists, defining what is right primarily by its capacity to sustain the political-economic status quo, irrespective of ecological consequences. This ethic permeates our political and policy choices, defining both the goals we set and the methods we use in addressing environmental challenges. The question remains: what drives this persistent anthropocentrism, preventing the emergence of a more inclusive Land Ethic capable of underpinning transformative change? Too often, political ecologists bypass this foundational philosophical inquiry, directly engaging with political and policy specifics instead.

The anthology *Environmental philosophy, politics, and policy*, edited by John Duerk, brings together diverse contributions aiming to answer this pressing question. Incorporating empirical examples from varied disciplines, including art history, cultural studies, political ecology, eco-feminism, and environmental economics, the volume provides a multidisciplinary examination of humanity's relationship with nature.

Structured into three sections, the anthology opens with philosophy, featuring three chapters that explore theoretical frameworks of political ecology. Adopting a phenomenological approach, Mark Thorsby's chapter, "Consumption and consciousness," argues the Land Ethic is unlikely to emerge because modern consumption is governed by an economic attitude driven purely by human interests. Consequently, the social and ecological impacts of consumption are normalized or simply classified as negative externalities of production, awaiting market or regulatory solutions that preserve the status quo. Thorsby asserts that this economic attitude is deeply embedded in our political, social, and cultural institutions, thus real change would require reframing the intentionality of consumption, shifting from anthropocentric exploitation towards a relational awareness within the broader biotic community. Jenuko Robinson's chapter on the environmental impacts of fashion extends this argument by drawing on Heidegger's concept of the technological age to critique the phenomenon of fast fashion and the solutions, such as closed-loop recycling, which reinforce rather than disrupt existing economic attitudes. Robinson suggests replacing the economic attitude that underpins fast fashion with a biomimetic approach to production, emphasizing that such a transformation requires broad political support and thus must appeal to diverse interests, including those of conservatives. While Robinson's chapter examines an entire industry, Alan Clune's chapter reconfigures Rawls' theory of justice to the distribution of human resources within the animal rights community, developing two principles of justice to consider the interests of non-human species.

The second part of the anthology, focusing on politics, comprises four diverse chapters unified by their exploration of how environmental narratives emerge, enter public consciousness, and consequently shape political discourse. Suzanne Roberts' chapter on gendered Eco Gothic landscapes of the American West, for example, investigates how poetry and novels from the 19th-century era of westward expansion both reflected and influenced contemporary perceptions of wilderness. Wilderness was frequently depicted as a perilous realm filled with villainy, where women, in particular, were portrayed as vulnerable and thus discouraged from venturing outdoors. Roberts suggests these gendered narratives persist, influencing modern collective attitudes towards nature, which could help explain pockets of apathy or even aversion to the wilderness. The political significance of narratives is not lost to the state, as underscored in editor John Duerk's analysis of the

Congressional hearings on radical animal liberation. Duerk highlights how state actors strategically deploy labels such as "radicals" and "ecoterrorists" to delegitimize animal liberation groups, reinforcing political narratives that protect entrenched interests aligned with the prevailing economic attitude. In addition, Jennifer Epley Sanders explores the formation of Muslim perspectives on the politics of climate change, highlighting the role of religion in building coalitions for environmental advocacy. Meanwhile, Camila Pombo's chapter compares nonprofit groups working on food sustainability for underprivileged communities in the US, identifying holistic programs that combine youth and community involvement, urban gardening and farming, and local economic empowerment.

The anthology's final section on policies consists of five chapters exploring environmental initiatives across varying scales, spanning both public and corporate contexts. At a global scale, Emilia Barreto Carvalho assesses the effectiveness of national policies across countries responsible for approximately 80 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. While environmental policies do result in incremental improvements to environmental quality (a reduction in emissions, in this case), they are insufficient to meet the warming targets outlined by the 2015 Paris Agreement. At a more focused regional level, Elizabeth Koebele and colleagues examine the potential role of water markets as tools for climate adaptation, using two river basins in the western United States – in Colorado and Nevada – as case studies. They illustrate how market mechanisms efficiently reallocate water according to local ecological and economic needs. However, this also exemplifies a policy operating within the same economic attitude criticized earlier by Thorsby. Moving further into local policy, Markie McBrayer analyses the distribution of bicycle infrastructure in urban areas through the lens of gentrification, offering findings that challenge assumptions about inequitable access for communities of color. Shifting from the theme of scale to space, Scott Lucas' chapter focuses on how different spaces – especially experimental spaces – allow environmental activists to challenge dominant narratives, including those underpinning present economies. Concluding the section, Joe McBride provides an engaging account of how early paintings and photographs of the American West significantly shaped federal and state landscape conservation policies, reinforcing the role of narratives in reshaping economic behaviors introduced in the first chapter.

The anthology's appeal lies in the breadth of disciplines represented across its chapters. This diversity provides readers an opportunity to step outside the disciplinary boundaries familiar to them, engaging with ideas and methods they may rarely encounter within their own academic silos. For environmental economists, for example, the exploration of art and literature's role in shaping environmental narratives not only offers fresh perspectives but also practical insights to enhance their analytical models – a notion captured in the emerging sub-discipline of narrative economics (Schiller, 2019). Similarly, public policy experts, who often bypass deeper philosophical considerations about environmental justice or the moral status of non-human entities, will find opportunities to engage with these foundational questions. Yet, this very disciplinary breadth also contributes to thematic incoherence across sections, limiting the anthology's ability to clearly connect philosophical insights with political and policy discussions. The thematic coherence among the three sections – philosophy, politics, and policy – is tenuous, as many chapters, particularly within the policy section, neither reference nor build explicitly upon the discussions in the preceding sections. Readers might thus benefit most by first fully engaging with the philosophy chapters before selectively reading contributions from subsequent sections.

Overall, *Environmental philosophy, politics, and policy* is a thought-provoking and epistemologically valuable work. It offers students and scholars of political ecology an insightful sampling of the diverse theoretical and methodological approaches within the field.

References

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