

# Political Ecology

Pankaj

**Abstract: Political ecology is the study of the intersection and relationship between the political, broadly understood, and environmental and ecological phenomena. Political, economic, social, and cultural forces affect, and are affected by, ecological and environmental trends. In this paper, we studied about Political Ecology and its Scope and Influences, application.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

The term "political ecology" was first coined by Frank Thone in an article published in 1935 (Nature Rambling: We Fight for Grass, The Science Newsletter 27, 717, Jan. 5: 14). Political ecology emerged in the 1980s within the field of geography from cultural ecology and development studies traditions. Initially phrased by Piers Blaikie, an expert in rural development and resource governance, as the multiscale analysis of environmental degradation from a political economy perspective, political ecology rejected neo-Malthusian explanations of human impacts on the environment. Political ecology is the study of the relationships between political, economic and social factors with environmental issues and changes. Political ecology differs from apolitical ecological studies by politicizing environmental issues and phenomena. At the heart of political ecology lies the notion that politics should be 'put first' in the attempt to understand how human-environment interactions may be linked (Bryant 1998) p80. Over the past 35 years political ecology has evolved (in theory, although not in practice) from an inherently structuralist mode of class analysis involving 'chains of explanation' between the exploited poor in a given locality and the normally distant exploiters (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987) towards what has been described as 'progressive contextualisation' (Bryant 2001).

Neo-Marxist approaches arose in opposition to apolitical neo-Malthusian views of human/society/nature complexities. Neo-Marxist approaches became popular for their simultaneous attention to political and economic factors in clarifying how material power (e.g. capital, wealth, military power) mediates human/society/nature relations (Biersack 2006: 3, 10; Bryant 1998: 80).

Political ecology's movement as a field since its inception in the 1970s has complicated its scope and goals. Through the discipline's history, certain influences have grown more and less influential in determining the focus of study. Peter Walker traces the importance of the ecological sciences in political ecology (Walker 2005, p. 74). He points to the transition, for many critics, from a 'structuralist' approach through the 1970s and 1980s, in which ecology maintains a key position in the discipline, to a 'poststructuralist' approach with an emphasis on the 'politics' in political ecology (Walker

2005, p. 74-75). This turn has raised questions as to the differentiation with environmental politics as well as the field's use of the term of 'ecology'.

## II. APPLICATION

Political ecology attempts to provide critiques as well as alternatives in the interplay of the environment and political, economic and social factors. political ecology can be used to:

- Inform policymakers and organisations of the complexities surrounding environment and development, thereby contributing to better environmental governance;
- Look at how unequal relations in and among societies affect the natural environment, especially in context of government policy.
- Understand the decisions that communities make about the natural environment in the context of their political environment, economic pressure, and societal regulations;

## III. PROBLEMS OF POLITICAL ECOLOGY

Political ecology has to address three crucial problems: limited resources and their uneven distribution; the relationship between industrialization and pressures on the environment; and finally, pollution and waste.

Limited resources and their uneven geographical distribution is the most obvious problem.

The second problem of political ecology is related to the level of industrial development, to economic growth and the corresponding growth of load on the environment.

There is a third problem – pollution. Pollution is the process of making land, water, air or other parts of the environment dirty and unsafe or unsuitable to use. This can be done through the introduction of a contaminant into a natural environment, but the contaminant doesn't need to be tangible. Things as simple as light, sound and temperature can be considered pollutants when introduced artificially into an environment. The emission of greenhouse gases particularly CO<sub>2</sub> is leading to global warming. Every other day new industries are being set up, new vehicles come on roads and trees are cut to make way for new homes. All of them, in direct or indirect way lead to increase in CO<sub>2</sub> in the environment.

## IV. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we studied about Political Ecology and its Scope and Influences, Application. Political ecology's broad scope and interdisciplinary nature lends itself to multiple definitions

and understandings. However, common assumptions across the field give it relevance. Political ecology is a leading source of innovative research on issues linked to poverty and the environment. Political ecology will often utilize the framework of political economy to analyze environmental issues.

## REFERENCES

- [1]. Blaikie, P., and Brookfield, H. *Land Degradation and Society*. Methuen: 1987.
- [2]. Adger, N.W., T.A. Benjaminsen, K. Brown and H. Svarstad. 2001. Advancing a political ecology of global environmental discourses. *Development and Change* 32: 681-715.
- [3]. Blaikie, Piers. 1985. *The Political Economy of Soil Erosion in Developing Countries*. London; New York: Longman.
- [4]. Bhaskar, R. 1997 (1975). *A realist theory of science*. London: Verso.
- [5]. Dove, Michael R., and Carol Carpenter, eds. 2008. *Environmental Anthropology: A Historical Reader*. MA: Blackwell.
- [6]. Elmhirst, R. 2011. Introducing new feminist political ecology. *Geoforum* 42: 129-132.
- [7]. Bryant, Raymond L. 1998. Power, knowledge and political ecology in the third world: a review, *Progress in Physical Geography* 22(1):79-94.
- [8]. Michael Minch "Political Ecology" *Encyclopedia of Global Justice* pp 863-865
- [9]. Escobar, A. 1996. Constructing nature: elements for a poststructuralist political ecology. In R.J. Peet and M.J. Watts (eds.) *Liberation ecologies: environment, development, social movements*. London: Routledge. Pp 46-68.
- [10]. Bryant, Raymond L. and Sinead Bailey. 1997. *Third World Political Ecology*. Routledge.
- [11]. Escobar, Arturo. 1996. "Construction Nature: elements for a post-structuralist political ecology". *Futures* 28(4): 325-343.
- [12]. Greenberg, James B. and Thomas K. Park. 1994. *Political Ecology*, *Journal of Political Ecology* 1: 1-12.
- [13]. Hecht, Susanna & Alexander Cockburn. 1990 [Updated edition 2010]. *Fate of the Forest: Developers, Destroyers, and Defenders of the Amazon*. University of Chicago Press.
- [14]. Peet, Richard and Michael Watts. 1993. Introduction: Development Theory and Environment in an Age of Market Triumphalism, *Economic Geography* 68(3): 227-253.
- [15]. Hershkovitz, Linda. 1993. Political Ecology and Environmental Management in the Loess Plateau, China, *Human Ecology* 21(4): 327-353.
- [16]. Khan, M.T. and T. Lynch 2013. The genealogy of contemporary nature/forest conservation. *Human Geography: a New Radical Journal* 6(3): 105-120.
- [17]. Mohammad Tanzimuddin Khan "Theoretical frameworks in political ecology and participatory nature/forest conservation: the necessity for a heterodox approach and the *critical moment*" *Journal of Political Ecology* Vol. 20, 2013 pp. 460-472
- [18]. Martinez-Alier, Joan. 2002. *The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation*. Edward Elgar.
- [19]. Paulson, Susan, Lisa L. Gezon, and Michael Watts. 2003. Locating the Political in Political Ecology: An Introduction, *Human Organization* 62(3): 205-217.
- [20]. Peet, Richard, Paul Robbins, and Michael Watts. (eds.) 2011. *Global Political Ecology*. Routledge.
- [21]. Peet, Richard and Michael Watts. eds. 1996. *Liberation ecologies: environment, development, social movements*. Routledge.
- [22]. Peluso, Nancy Lee. 1992. *Rich Forests, Poor People: Resource Control and Resistance in Java*. University of California Press.
- [23]. Kloppenburg, J. R. 1988. *First the seed: the political economy of plant biotechnology 1492-2000*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [24]. Peluso Nancy Lee & Michael Watts (eds.). 2001. *Violent Environments*. Cornell University Press.
- [25]. Perry, Richard J. 2003. *Five Key Concepts in Anthropological Thinking*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- [26]. Tatiana Romanova "What Is Political Ecology?" <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/What-Is-Political-Ecology-15084>
- [27]. Stott, P., and S. Sullivan. 2000. *Political ecology: science, myth and power*. London: Arnold.
- [28]. Ritzer, George. 2008. *Modern Sociological Theory*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- [29]. Robbins, Paul. 2012. *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*. 2nd ed. Blackwell.
- [30]. <http://www.ejolt.org/2013/02/political-ecology/>
- [31]. Rocheleau, D. 1995. Gender and a Feminist Political Ecology Perspective, *IDS Institute for Development Studies* 26(1): 9-16.
- [32]. Sayre, Nathan. 2002. *Species of Capital: Ranching, Endangered Species, and Urbanization in the Southwest*. University of Arizona Press.
- [33]. Sutton, Mark Q. and E.N. Anderson. 2004. *Introduction to Cultural Ecology*. Altamira.
- [34]. Vayda, Andrew P. and Bradley B. Walters. 1999. Against Political Ecology, *Human Ecology* 27(1): 167-179.
- [35]. Walker, Peter A. 2005. Political ecology: where is the ecology? *Progress in Human Geography* 29(1):73–82.
- [36]. *Pollution Facts & Types of Pollution* By Alina Bradford, Live Science Contributor <http://www.livescience.com/22728-pollution-facts.html>
- [37]. Walker, Peter A. 2006. Political ecology: where is the policy? *Progress in Human Geography* 30(3): 382-395.
- [38]. Wolf, Eric. 1972. Ownership and Political Ecology, *Anthropological Quarterly* 45(3): 201-205.
- [39]. Rinkesh "What is Pollution?" <http://www.conserve-energy-future.com/PollutionTypes.php>
- [40]. <http://worldwildlife.org/threats/pollution>
- [41]. Watts, Michael. 1983 [reprinted 2013]. *Silent Violence: Food, Famine and Peasantry in Northern Nigeria*. University of California Press.
- [42]. Watts, Michael. 2000. "Political Ecology." In Sheppard, E. and T. Barnes (eds.), *A Companion to Economic Geography*. Blackwell.