

The Gramsci-Foucault Nexus and Environmental Sociology

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Abstract

A theoretical engagement with the “Gramsci-Foucault nexus” is useful for bringing together key concepts from environmental realism and environmental constructionism, which is one of the central theoretical tensions of environmental sociology. This theoretical lens is grounded in an essentially critical orientation, but also takes postmodernism seriously. The Gramsci-Foucault nexus provides an overarching theoretical framework that enables us to inhabit environmental sociology’s irritable tension between environmental realism and environmental constructivism. It sensitizes us to the intersection of culture and political economy. It also draws our attention to the intimate connection between the operation of social power at “micro” and “macro” dimensions. The result is a critical theory that is better equipped to comprehend the subtleties and complexities of environmental conflict in contemporary capitalist societies.

Introduction¹

The sub-discipline of environmental sociology is a relative newcomer to the academic field. From its emergence in the 1970s, environmental sociology has been distinct in its willingness to take seriously the relationship between society and the physical environment (Dunlap and Catton, 1979). During the development of environmental sociology, key research areas have included: the social dimensions of environmental conflict, land use planning, environmental risk, and environmentalism as a social movement (Dunlap and Catton, 1979). One of the major theoretical divisions that has emerged within environmental sociology since

its inception is the split between environmental “realism” and environmental “constructivism” (Buttel, 1996; Lidskog, 2001). The former focuses on the “material-ecological” substructure of environmental conflict (Buttel, 1996: 62). From this perspective, “the environment” is a real entity that places limits on human economic activity. Environmental science is able to define these limits and provide guidance for solving environmental problems. Environmental sociology done from such a standpoint tends to focus on political and economic barriers to environmental sustainability. By contrast, environmental constructivism represents a “cultural invasion of environmental sociology,” influenced by postmodernism and cultural studies (74). Here, “the environment” and environmental problems are viewed as social constructions. As such, we can conceive of a multiplicity of “environments,” rather than a singular “environment.” Environmental sociology from this perspective focuses more on the discursive processes that define and contest “environmental problems.”

Lidskog attempts to bridge the divide between these two sub-disciplines through a “stratified ontology.” This position asserts that there are analytically distinct and autonomous “levels” of social reality (Lidskog, 2001: 126). From this position, we can recognize that “there is no doubt that nature matters for society” (128). At the same time, we can recognize that all environmental knowledge is inevitably filtered through “human interpretation and articulation” (129). This brings us to an environmental sociology that asserts that the “social reality” of environmental problems is both “discursively *and* materially constituted” (125). Taking Lidskog’s ontological position as a starting point, I would like to focus on the tension between the “political ecology” orientation of environmental realism and the “cultural” focus of environmental constructivism.

Stuart Hall argues that theoretical movement occurs through living within and wresting with “irritable tensions,” such as the divide between environmental realism and environmental constructivism (Hall, 1992). A theoretical framework derived from the intersection of the work of Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) and Michel Foucault (1926-1984) may be useful for bridging the different foci of these two approaches to environmental sociology. It may help us creating space for movement while living with this particular irritable tension.

A theoretical lens constructed at the “Gramsci-Foucault nexus” enables us to connect the cultural, economic and political dimensions of environmental conflict. Gramsci’s theoretical work, centred on the notion of hegemony, examines how cultural processes are intimately related, but not reducible, to systems of economic and political power (Gramsci, 1971; Femia, 1981). Carroll and Ratner have argued that the Gramscian concepts of hegemony and counter-hegemony provide an innovative “middle ground” position for critical theory (Carroll and Ratner, 1994). It avoids both the “class reductionism” associated with much critical theory and the “fragmentary relativism” that characterizes much postmodernist work (Carroll and Ratner, 1994: 7). My use of Gramscian theory will be linked to the theoretical work of Michel Foucault. I believe that Foucault’s work is essentially compatible with a Gramscian orientation. Foucault’s notions of power/knowledge and discourse provide useful tools for analyzing the mechanisms for reproducing hegemony at specific social-historical sites (Foucault, 1980b).

The notion of a Gramsci-Foucault nexus is not entirely novel. Both authors are well known throughout the social sciences and have spawned their own intellectual traditions. Furthermore, we may look to the work of Paul Routledge and Stephen Gill for earlier attempts to map out this theoretical terrain. Routledge has attempted to apply the intersection of Foucauldian and Gramscian theory to social movements research. He argues that Foucault’s conception of power, while offering insight, is “too amorphous” (Routledge, 1996: 511). He writes that power “has both macro and micro dimensions – local resistances tend to privilege the subject while macro processes (e.g. imperialism) tend to be manipulated by states – and this difference is not given due consideration by Foucault” (511). Elsewhere, Gill draws on the intersection of Foucault and Gramsci to analyze neoliberal ideology within processes of globalization. He writes: “Despite the Foucauldian preoccupation with the problematic of power/knowledge as localized and institutionalized by discourse, with localized resistance . . . there is . . . no adequate link between macro and micro-structures of power” (Gill, 1995: 403). Both of these authors attempt to bridge Foucauldian concepts with a Gramscian framework as a means to ground Foucault’s model of power/knowledge in a model of political life which has a more adequate grasp of economic and political structure (Gill, 1995; Routledge, 1996).

Routledge and Gill draw on the Gramsci-Foucault nexus as a means to live within the tension between the politically engaged standpoint of critical theory and the attention to discourse of poststructuralism. This theoretical lens is essentially critical, but also appreciates the subtlety and fluidity of the social world as it is described in poststructuralist theory. From this point of departure, I will extend the work of Routledge and Gill by arguing that this theoretical lens may be brought into environmental sociology as a means of adding depth and complexity to the study of environmental conflict. The Gramsci-Foucault nexus provides an overarching theoretical framework that enables us to inhabit one of environmental sociology's irritable tensions between environmental realism and environmental constructivism.

Political Ecology and Environmental Constructivism

Political ecology is rooted in the Marxian theoretical tradition and locates environmental conflict within a broader understanding of social inequality. Here, the dependence of capital on the colonization and depletion of natural ecosystems is seen as a theoretical blind spot in sociology. Where the "cultural" realm is discussed, it tends to be simplified and constructed in terms of a dominant ideology. Reading this work through the Gramsci-Foucault nexus may add depth and complexity to the analysis.

Allan Schnaiberg's work in environmental sociology provides several useful key concepts, such as the "treadmill of production," "managed scarcity," and "ecological synthesis" (Schnaiberg, 1980; Gould et al, 1993; Gould et al, 1995; Schnaiberg, 2002; Buttel, 2003). Schnaiberg defines the "treadmill of production" as the ensemble of social groups who have a stake in the ongoing depletion of natural resources which underlies capitalist production. While capital obviously benefits from the smooth working of the treadmill, through the accumulation of profit, other groups benefit as well. Workers are integrated into the treadmill, both as wage earners and as consumers of the goods and services provided by capital. Likewise, the state is integrated into the treadmill because it is dependent upon the continued good-will of capital and because it must maintain the consent of the governed.

However, as the treadmill comes up against ecological limits to production, there are two choices available to society: managed scarcity or ecological synthesis. Managed scarcity involves making the minimum

change necessary to mitigate against environmental problems while preserving the integrity of the treadmill. Under managed scarcity, environmental health and pollution are allocated according to existing structures of economic power. By contrast, ecological synthesis involves a radical re-orientation of the treadmill according to environmental and social justice values (Schnaiberg, 1980; Gould et al, 1993).

John Bellamy Foster also demonstrates a political ecology perspective. Like Schnaiberg, Foster is concerned with themes such as: the inherent incompatibility of capitalism and ecological sustainability; the critique of "sustainable development" as an eco-capitalist ideology; and the need to link environmentalism and social justice (Foster, 2002). In his analysis of the conflict over the old-growth forests of the American Pacific Northwest, Foster concludes that capital and the state have worked to split labour and environmentalists by mobilizing a dominant ideology of "trees versus jobs" (Foster, 1991; Foster, 1993). This dominant ideology conflates the interests of labour and the interests of capital, thereby enhancing the strength of capital in the conflict over control of forest resources. For Foster, it is imperative that environmentalists challenge this dominant ideology. He writes: "An ecological movement that stands for the earth alone and ignores class and other social inequalities will succeed at best in displacing environmental problems, meanwhile reinforcing the dominant relations of power in global capitalism" (Foster, 1993: 12).

Finally, Alexander Simon also looks at the ways in which a "dominant ideology" has been used by forestry capital in rural British Columbia to divide labour and environmentalists (Simon, 1998). This has been accomplished through the creation of an ideological dichotomy between "the rural working class, which has direct, practical knowledge of the environment and the urban, middle class environmentalists who do not directly engage in material interchanges with nature, and therefore have flawed ideas regarding forestry issues" (Simon, 1998: 24). As Simon notes, "while it is apparent that not all workers and rural residents are so easily duped by corporate propaganda, these tactics constitute a major barrier to an effective labor-environmentalist alliance" (36).

While the political ecology perspective is useful, it is also problematic in that it often fails to provide sufficient attention to the cultural realm of environmental conflict and the ways in which "the environment" is constructed through social interaction. For example, while

Schnaiberg perceives the mass media and consumerist advertising as a “barrier” to environmental consciousness and “consumer autonomy,” the importance of cultural facets of environmental politics are given very limited attention within his work (Schnaiberg, 1980: 179; also see Hanningan, 1995). Likewise, where Gould, Weinberg and Schnaiberg discuss the increasingly global reach of the treadmill, they neglect the corollary emergence of a “sustainable development” discourse that legitimizes the spread of an ecologically-destructive political economy (Gould et al, 1995).

Also, while Foster and Simon both turn their attention to the “cultural” realm of ideology, this analysis relies upon an untenable “dominant ideology” perspective. That is, cultural constructions take on the appearance of reified entities; we lose an appreciation for the social processes through which culture (and “nature”) is created, maintained and challenged. Foster writes, “From an ecosocialist perspective there is no difficulty in seeing that the rapid destruction of the old growth forest is not about owls vs. jobs but ecosystems vs. profits” (Foster, 1993: 41). However, there is little exploration of the cultural processes that lead the “owls vs. jobs” discourse to become hegemonic, while the “ecosystems vs. profits” discourse remains marginalized. Drawing upon the intersecting concepts of hegemony and power/knowledge, we could problematize the actual communicative processes through which the interests of capital are articulated with the interests of labour. We would see how social conflict over the control of natural resources is intimately related to cultural conflict over the social meaning of “environmental problems.”

Where there has been a more satisfying move towards an integration of political economy and cultural analysis is in the “new political ecology” of Escobar, Peluso and others. This body of work focuses on “environmental struggles as both material and symbolic discursive practices as embodying power relations” (Goldman and Schurman, 2000). Or, as Peluso puts it, new political ecology looks to “conjunctures or convergences of culture, power, and political economy as analytical starting points” (Peluso and Watts, 2001: 25). For example, one of the main themes in this work is the ways in which the globalization of capitalist relations of production and consumption has been linked to dominant discourse of “sustainable development” that works to re-colonize the global south as an object of environmental management (Escobar,

1992; Escobar, 1995; Guha, 2000; Peluso, 1992; Peluso and Watts, 2001; Sachs, 1993; Sklair, 2001).

As Escobar writes:

Sustainable development is the last attempt to articulate modernity and capitalism before the advent of cyberculture. The resignification of nature as environment; the reinscription of the Earth into capital via the gaze of science; the reinterpretation of poverty as effect of destroyed environment; and the new lease on management and planning as arbiters between people and nature, all of these are effects of the discursive construction of sustainable development (Escobar, 1995: 202).

In examining how the "hegemony of globalism" is accomplished through a sustainable development discourse, this new political ecology approaches the intersection of culture and social structure from a political economy standpoint.

If political ecology tends to foreground the political economy of environmental conflict, environmental constructivism takes a more post-modern view of the society-environment relationship. Here, the "cultural" realm of environmental conflict tends to be privileged over an analysis that locates environmental conflict within the political economy of a society. In an ideal-typical form, environmental constructivism is concerned with the "ideas of society . . . [that] have been reproduced, legitimated or transformed through appeals to nature and the environment" (Lidskog, 2001: 118). In general, this theoretical orientation is "agnostic . . . concerning the validity of the ecological threats that natural scientists, politicians and the media create and distribute" (119). Like the "radical pluralism" critiqued by Carroll and Ratner, environmental constructivism can lose sight of the economic and political structures that help shape environmental conflict, as it focuses on the world of discourse (Carroll and Ratner, 1994).

One of the major arguments of environmental constructivism is that ecological science cannot be taken as an unproblematic description of reality. Instead, environmental problems -- and the "environment" itself -- are constructed by a broad range of social actors that includes scientists, activists, politicians and writers. While something of the natural

environment lies beyond the horizon of the social, once it is brought into the realm of public debate, it is inevitably translated into a social construction (Macnaghten and Urry, 1998). From this perspective, the forests which are the subject of forest policy debate are essentially social entities. As Macnaghten and Urry write, "There is no nature simply waiting to be conserved, but, rather all forms of its conservation entail judgments as to what indeed is nature" (Macnaghten and Urry, 1998: 23).

John Hannigan's work is concerned with the ways in which environmental problems are socially constructed through the claims-making activity of environmental activists (Hannigan, 1995). Hannigan offers a model for the successful construction of an "environmental problem." For example, environmental claims-makers must invoke scientific authority to legitimize their claims. There must also be environmental spokespersons who can translate scientific knowledge into public common sense. Finally, environmental claims-makers must be able to reach the public through the media. Through public claims-making, environmental activists work to construct a social reality about the environment and our relationship with it. The mass media are a key site where environmental claims-makers try to convince the public that an environmental problem is "novel and important" (Hannigan, 1995: 55).

Catriona Sandilands also provides a more constructionist approach to theorizing the environment-society relationship. In *The Good Natured Feminist: Ecofeminism and the Quest for Democracy*, Sandilands explores issues of identity construction, authenticity and political representation in ecological and ecofeminist politics. She espouses an ecological politics which eschews essentialism and universalism in favour of the particular (Sandilands, 1999). Sandilands also problematizes the notion of authenticity: the claim to be able to speak on behalf of "nature." As she notes, the "nature" produced by environmentalists or environmental scientists is inherently social; it is transformed in its translation into discourse (Sandilands, 1995).

The question of how to engage in a politics of environmental protection that recognizes the socially-constructed nature of "nature" is addressed by Sandilands. Through the notion of "wild justice," Sandilands offers a conceptual frame for recognizing that there is a value of nature as subject, beyond social discourse, while simultaneously recognizing that any particular representation of nature is a social construction

(Sandilands, 1994). As Sandilands writes, there is an “aspect of nature that cannot be apprehended in political discourse,” something that is inevitably beyond the horizon of the social (Sandilands, 1994: 168). Through the concept of wild justice, Sandilands illuminates a potential solution to the problem of trying to authentically represent “nature” within the political realm. She writes:

By conceptualizing the domination of nature as a hierarchical process of oppression, nature becomes a social problem, linked to and interstructured with other forms of oppression. The liberation of nature is thus only attainable through struggles for social justice (169).

In Sandilands’ formulation, environmental politics should move towards the elaboration of a democratic, intersubjective nature, which still recognizes the existence of something fundamentally beyond the horizon of the social. Thus, despite their different orientations, political ecology and environmental constructivism may both lead to a model of environmental politics which articulates ecological concerns with a politics of social justice.

While environmental constructivism’s analysis of the cultural dimension of environmental conflict is a necessary corrective to the cultural blind spot in political ecology, this perspective often lacks a connection with questions of economic and political power. The large discrepancies in social power between environmental claims-makers and the corporate and state actors in environmental conflict are rarely problematized. While environmental constructivism avoids the simplicity of a “dominant ideology” approach, it tends to overlook the processes through which the cultural construction of environmental problems is linked with political and economic structures of power.

Political ecology and environmental constructivism each offer an intriguing perspective on the questions of environmental conflict and the environment-society relationship. Political ecology is valuable in that it locates environmental conflict within a network of social and economic power. It illuminates the connections between environmental issues and questions of social justice. At the same time, environmental constructivism’s emphasis on the essentially social character of environmental conflict is an important theoretical contribution. In the following section, I

will outline a theoretical lens constructed at the Gramsci-Foucault nexus, which may provide a framework for bringing together key concepts from both sides of this theoretical divide. The Gramsci-Foucault nexus is a valuable tool for dealing with this theoretical tension through “a genuinely dialogically critical engagement” (Hall, 1992: 291)

The Gramsci-Foucault Nexus

In the previous section, I have outlined the division between a more “critical” political ecology perspective and a more “postmodern” environmental constructivist perspective in environmental sociology. In this section, I will construct a theoretical lens from the intersection of Gramscian and Foucauldian theory which is essentially critical, but which also takes postmodernism seriously. The result is a critical theory that is equipped to comprehend the subtlety and complexity of environmental conflict in a modern capitalist society.

The work of Antonio Gramsci and his successors forms the foundation for this theoretical lens. Through the notions of hegemony and counter-hegemony, Gramscian theory provides a framework for analyzing the connections between culture, economy and political conflict (Gramsci, 1971). As such, it provides a conceptual frame that can be used to draw on the strengths of both political ecology and environmental constructivism. For Gramsci, hegemony is a form of social control grounded in the consent and willing participation of the governed; it is an alternative to coercion as a means of governing a society. Hegemony is distinctly *not* synonymous with a dominant ideology (Grossberg, 1996). Instead, it may be understood as a set of core values that are integrated into everyday life. Hegemony is produced through the state, but also through the organizations of “civil society,” such as the mass media, or religious and educational institutions (Femia, 1981: 24). While hegemony tends to reflect the interests of elite groups, it must be consciously maintained and constantly negotiated. As it is forged, it must also account for the needs of subaltern groups (Hall, 1996). As Hall writes, while “the ideological field is always . . . articulated to different social and political positions, its shape and structure do *not* precisely mirror . . . the class structure of society” (Hall, 1996: 434).

Hegemony is also a “cultural” form of social control that is intimately linked with the political economy of society. As Williams writes, hegemony is a “specific economic, political, and cultural system”; it places

“pressures and limits” on our understanding of the social world (Williams, 1977: 110). While all social actors can contribute to the formation of a hegemonic order, there are meaningful differences in political-economic power that privilege certain actors in the cultural production of hegemony. As Williams observes, “To say that ‘men’ define and shape their whole lives is true only in abstraction. In any actual society there are specific inequalities in means and therefore in capacity to realize this process” (Williams, 1977: 108). By recognizing the economic factors that limit participation in the creation of hegemony, Gramsci theorizes the connections between the culture-formation of a society and political-economic power.

The notion of hegemony addresses the failure of revolutionary class consciousness to emerge in industrial societies. For Gramsci, critical consciousness does not spontaneously emerge from the experience of labour exploitation. Rather, critical consciousness must be actively developed in opposition to a hegemonic order (Williams, 1977). This leads us to Gramsci’s inter-related notions of subalternity, the “organic intellectual,” and counter-hegemony. In Gramsci’s usage, subaltern groups consist of those who are subordinated in the process of capitalist production. In this sense, the Marxian working class is the archetypal subaltern group. However, the notion of subalternity has been extended by others to include the multiplicity of social identities that demarcate a subordinate position within the hierarchies of political, economic, or cultural power (cf. Hall, 1996). For example, subalternity can be read through the lens of gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity.

According to Gramsci, the critical consciousness of subaltern groups must be actively produced. This is where the “organic intellectual” fits in. While “traditional intellectuals,” who are found in positions of privilege, generally act to reproduce hegemony, organic intellectuals can emerge from within subaltern groups (Gramsci, 1971). They are critical intellectuals, whose lived experience within a subaltern group leads them to critique the dominant hegemony. While everyone has the potential to become an organic intellectual, not everyone fulfills this social role (Gramsci, 1971: 9). Organic intellectuals are the nuclei around which counter-hegemonic discourses emerge. As Hall writes, “The organic intellectual cannot absolve himself or herself from the responsibility of transmitting those ideas, that knowledge, through the intellec-

tual function, to those who do not belong, professionally, in the intellectual class" (Hall, 1992: 281).

Stuart Hall's concept of "articulation" provides an important addition to the Gramscian theoretical framework. The notion of articulation focuses on the social process whereby discourses are joined with each other; as well as with historically specific political and economic practices (Grossberg, 1996; Rupert, 2000). The concept of articulation is defined by Hall as follows:

An articulation is . . . the form of the connection that *can* make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time. . . . the so-called "unity" of a discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be re-articulated in different ways . . . The "unity" which matters is a linkage between that articulated discourse and the social forces with which it can, under certain historical conditions, but need not necessarily, be connected (Hall qtd Grossberg, 1996: 53).

As an illustrative example, Rupert uses the concept of articulation to examine how anti-globalization discourse has been linked with both progressive, leftist political movements, as well as with a right-wing political agenda (Rupert, 2000). In his analysis, we see how the counter-hegemonic critique of globalization can be articulated with demands for social justice and environmental sustainability. Alternately, it can be articulated with a nationalist and religious fundamentalist political agenda. Through the key concept of articulation, we see how hegemonic values are linked to political and economic structures in specific historical-social locations. Articulation helps us map the points of convergence between culture, economy and politics.

Finally, Laurie Adkin provides a useful illustration of a Gramscian environmental sociology. Adkin argues that there is "not one 'environmentalism' but many," which can either be articulated with hegemonic or counter-hegemonic political projects (Adkin, 1992: 135). Adkin has examined both the diversity of Canadian environmentalism, as well as the broader discourse of "sustainable development" (Adkin, 1992; Adkin, 2000). Through this research, she has demonstrated how envi-

ronmentalism may either be contained, through articulation with an eco-capitalist project; or how it may be mobilized as part of a broader counter-hegemonic movement. For Adkin, the “apolitical” environmental discourse adapted by many social movement actors can lead to a sort of “passive revolution.” In Gramscian theory, the trap of “passive revolution” is described as the failure “to alter hegemonic constraints” by engaging in a politics geared towards “limited reforms” (Carroll and Ratner, 1999: 31). In Adkin’s view, the radical democratic potential of ecology has frequently been contained within the structures of a capitalist economy. Writing about the “sustainable development” project, Adkin observes:

Many environmentalists have been persuaded that market mechanisms offer the only achievable gains for environmental objectives. There has been a trend towards . . . the adoption of an environmental management approach linked to technological modernization . . . and divorced from transformative social projects (Adkin, 2000: 64).

By contrast, Adkin argues that environmental discourse and politics should be articulated with other social movements in a broader counter-hegemonic movement.

Gramscian theory provides a good model for understanding how hegemony is constructed, maintained, challenged and transformed. It gives a useful account of how elite values are disseminated and integrated, without relying on a crude “dominant ideology” perspective. However, I believe that this model can be enriched by incorporating insights from Michel Foucault about the relationship between power and knowledge. Foucauldian theory enables us to better understand how hegemony is produced at a specific site of social interaction. Thus, I would like to bring Foucault’s theory of power/knowledge into dialogue with Gramscian theory.

Foucault’s model of power points to an understanding of power as a process, rather than as a property, or an object. In this model, power is not a zero sum game. Individuals are embedded within networks of power. They simultaneously wield power and are governed by it in their relationships with others. According to Foucault, power “is never localized here or there, never in anybody’s hands, never appropriated as a

commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization” (Foucault, 1980b: 98). From this understanding of power, it follows that an analysis of power must concern itself with the processes through which power is exercised. As Foucault writes:

If power is properly speaking the way in which relations of forces are deployed and given concrete expression, rather than analyzing it in terms of cession, contract or alienation, or functionally in terms of its maintenance of the relations of production, should we not analyze it primarily in terms of *struggle, conflict and war?* (Foucault, 1980b: 90).

In this formulation, discursive strategies of power are not translated wholesale by dominant groups into social practice (Gordon, 1980). Just as hegemony is never a finished project, so too are strategies of power contested and re-shaped as they are applied in real social relations.

Building upon this model of power, Foucault introduces the concept of power/knowledge: the notion that power is intimately linked with discourse. Gordon writes that discourses are marked by “immanent principles of regularity, they are also bound by regulations enforced through social practices of appropriation, control and policing” (Gordon, 1980: 245). The regulation of discourse deals with who is allowed to speak on a given topic and which knowledges are subjugated in the production of “truth” (Foucault, 1980b: 81-82). Discourses are vehicles, or sites, of social power. As Foucault notes, “relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses” (Foucault, 1980b: 93). If discourses are sites for the exercise of social power, then the production of discourse may also constrain and challenge the exercise of power. Networks of power/knowledge are also sites of resistance, where “truth” is produced and contested by oppositional groups as well as elites. The result, as Gordon writes, is that “discourse is a political commodity” (Gordon, 1980: 245).

Foucault’s understanding of discourse, power and knowledge leads to the post-structural destabilization of “truth.” From this perspective, truth becomes a social construct, built from a network of dominant discourses.

As Foucault writes: "Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true" (Foucault, 1980a: 131). From a Foucauldian perspective, the research task cannot be to evaluate discourse as "true" or "false," as all discourses are socially constructed. Rather, we can see only how discourses are mobilized in the exercise of social power.

Finally, a Foucauldian orientation to environmental sociology has been employed by several authors. For example, Timothy Luke has drawn heavily upon Foucault's concept of "governmentality" in developing his own analysis "environmentality" (Foucault, 1991; Luke, 1999a; Luke, 1999b; Luke, 2002). Here, the government of ecological populations is accomplished through a politics of "eco-managerialism," which takes as its guiding mission the "redefining and then administering the earth as 'natural resources'" (Luke, 1999a: 104). Here, the government and environmental science work to transform non-human nature into the "terrestrial infrastructure for global capital" (106). The concept of governmentality has also been taken up by Matthews in his analysis of the "turbot war" conflict between Canada and Spain in 1995 (Matthews, 1996). Matthews concludes that the Canadian state used discourses of ecological risk and species preservation to provide moral grounding to a legally questionable action: the seizure of a Spanish fishing ship outside of its national jurisdiction. Thus, ecological discourse is mobilized to legitimize the state's governmentality over fish populations.

Foucault's notion of biopower has also been adapted for environmental sociology (Foucault, 1978). Essentially, biopower refers to the power of the state to regulate and govern entire populations. As Foucault writes, biopower is concerned with "the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes"; as such the emergence of biopower was "an indispensable element in the development of capitalism" (Foucault, 1978: 140-141). Rutherford has argued that the notion of biopower can usefully be extended into the realm of the ecological, where natural "populations" were defined, through scientific systems of power/knowledge, as a species body that could be subject to processes of governmentality (Rutherford, 1999; also see Rutherford, 1994).

There are both points of intersection and points of tension involved in bringing Gramscian and Foucauldian theory together. Here, I will turn

to critiques of Foucault which justify the subordination of Foucauldian key concepts within a broadly Gramscian theoretical lens. In Nancy Fraser's critique of Foucault, she problematizes Foucault's "bracketing" of epistemological and normative frameworks in his analysis of power/knowledge (Fraser, 1989).² For Fraser, there is a tension in Foucault's work between claims to normative agnosticism, and a style of writing that is obviously engaged and critical. For her, this tension is unresolved in Foucault's own work, leading to vagueness. Thus, Fraser illuminates one of the points of tension between Foucault and Gramsci. Foucault's refusal to apply moral evaluation to the production of discourse or the exercise of power is inconsistent with Gramscian theory's commitment to a critical and politically engaged research stance. From a Foucauldian perspective, we cannot evaluate whether or not a given discourse is "true" or "false." The evaluation of "truth" is outside the realm of debate, once we accept that the "truth" of a discourse is not an objective fact, but rather the result of the exercise of social power. Bringing Foucault into dialogue with Gramscian theory may be one way to circumvent Foucault's moral agnosticism, while acknowledging the tenuous character of "truth."

Like Fraser, Hall argues that Foucault's key concepts of discourse, power/knowledge and discipline are incompatible with an "apolitical" stance that rejects the notion of ideology (Grossberg, 1996). As Hall writes, "What Foucault would talk about is the setting in place, through the institutionalization of a discursive regime, of a number of competing regimes of truth and, within these regimes, the operation of power" (Hall qtd Grossberg, 1996: 48). For Hall, this is quite consistent with Gramsci's notion of hegemony, despite Foucault's reluctance to use the term "ideology." Hall continues, arguing, "I don't see how you can retain the notion of 'resistance,' as he does, without facing questions about the constitution of dominance in ideology" (48). For Hall, we can comprehend Foucault's notion of power/knowledge as something similar to Gramsci's model of "hegemony." By integrating the most useful key concepts from Foucault into a broadly Gramscian framework, we move towards a resolution of this ambiguity in Foucauldian theory.

Another point of criticism raised by Hall deals with Foucault's exclusive focus on discourse as a field of inquiry. Hall argues that "the fully discursive position is a reductionism upward, rather than a reductionism downward, as economism was" (Hall qtd Grossberg, 1996: 57). Here,

bringing Foucault into dialogue with Gramsci is also useful, as Gramscian theory retains a focus on “the way in which ideological/cultural/discursive practices continue to exist within the determining lines of force of material relations, and the expropriation of nature” (57). Thus, while Foucault’s model of power/knowledge may be a useful analytical tool for examining how power is produced, exercised and challenged in a specific research site, Gramscian theory draws our attention to the need to link the politics of discourse with political and economic relationships in the world beyond the text. In a similar vein, Carroll and Ratner note that the post-structural erasure of a sense of structural – or “extra-discursive” -- boundaries to social behaviour is problematic (Carroll and Ratner, 1994). By locating the Foucauldian key concepts of power/knowledge and discourse within a broadly Gramscian analytical framework, we can more usefully account for the ways in which discourse is articulated with political and economic conflict outside the realm of the textual.

Finally, Carroll and Ratner note that there is a profound difference between the Gramscian notion of counter-hegemony and the model of “anti-hegemony” that is implicit in Foucauldian theory (Carroll and Ratner, 1994). As they write, the form of resistance espoused by Foucault is “not *counter*-hegemonic in the sense of aspiring to build consensus around an emancipatory project; it is *anti*-hegemonic in the sense of opposing attempts to construct a general interest of whatever kind” (Carroll and Ratner, 1994: 13). Here, Gramsci’s notion of counter-hegemony is more useful if we wish to adopt a critical research stance, which is aligned with a movement for social change.

Despite the points of tension between Gramscian and Foucauldian theory, there is also a degree of convergence, which makes a dialogue between their respective bodies of work interesting and useful. Foucault’s notion of power/knowledge is a useful addition to the Gramscian framework in that it reinforces the notion that “hegemony” is not an object that is wielded by one class over another.³ Rather, it may be viewed as a macro-social description of a multitude of social processes, many of which occur on a micro-social level. Hegemony may be read as a short-hand for the repeated exercise of ideological power across a vast number of social sites. This conception of power draws attention to the need to research the localized sites where hegemony is exercised. While Gramsci offers the conceptual tools for a larger-scale explanation of

hegemony, Foucault offers the analytical tools for examining the production of hegemony at the local level.

Conclusion

A theoretical lens constructed at the “Gramsci-Foucault nexus” enables us to connect the cultural, economic and political dimensions of environmental conflict. Gramsci’s theoretical work, centred on the notion of hegemony, examines how cultural processes are intimately related, but not reducible, to systems of economic and political power. At the same time, I believe that an engagement with Foucauldian theory can enrich an essentially Gramscian orientation. Foucault’s notions of power/knowledge and discourse provide useful tools for analyzing the mechanisms for reproducing hegemony at specific social-historical sites.

This Gramsci-Foucault nexus is essentially critical, but also appreciates the subtlety and fluidity of the social world as it is described in post-modern theory. The Gramsci-Foucault nexus provides an overarching theoretical framework that can help us bridge the political ecology-environmental constructivism dichotomy in environmental sociology. It sensitizes us to the intersection of culture and political economy. It also draws our attention to the intimate connection between the operation of social power at “micro” and “macro” dimensions. As such; this theoretical lens may add depth and complexity to the study of environmentalism and environmental conflict. It is a potentially valuable tool for inhabiting the irritable tension between environmental realism and environmental constructivism. Though it cannot completely resolve this tension, it does allow us to create movement within this tension.

Endnotes

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2. The problematic relationship between Foucauldian epistemology and environmental politics is discussed by Darier (1999), Quigley (1999) and Chaloupka (2002).

3. This is not an error made by Gramsci, or by the other "Gramscian" theorists discussed here. However, as Hall notes, this misuse of "hegemony" is quite common (Grossberg 1996, 59).

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