GREENING THE STATE?
ECOLOGICAL MODERNIZATION BETWEEN STATE AND
MOVEMENT IN THE USA, UK, GERMANY AND NORWAY

Christian Hunold
Department of History & Politics
Drexel University
Philadelphia, PA 19104
USA
hunoldc@drexel.edu

and

John S. Dryzek
Social and Political Theory Program
Research School of Social Sciences
Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200
Australia
jdryzek@coombs.anu.edu.au

with contributions from

David Downes, Hans-Kristian Hernes, David Schlosberg

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Prologue: A Brief History of the State

In the beginning was the state. The early modern authoritarian state had three core tasks: to keep order internally, compete internationally, and raise the resources to finance these first two tasks (Skocpol, 1979). These can be termed the domestic order, survival, and revenue imperatives.

Revenue was raised via extractive taxation from a fairly static economic base. With the development of capitalism, a growing economy enabled state revenues to increase without any increase in rates of taxation, while simultaneously promoting social order by increasing the size of the economic pie. Thus a fourth imperative developed from the domestic order and revenue imperatives: the economic one of securing economic growth (what Marxists would call accumulation). This development enabled the entry of the bourgeoisie into the state, for their defining interest in profit maximization was now in harmony with the economic imperative.

The further development of capitalism produced an organized working class that threatened the stability of the political economy. At first this challenge was met by political repression. Eventually the welfare state developed in order to cushion the working class against the dislocations and fluctuations of capitalism. Thus a fifth imperative developed from the domestic order one: what post-Marxists (e.g., Offe, 1984) would call legitimation. This development enabled the entry of the organized working class into the state, for its defining interest could be assimilated to the legitimation imperative.

Contemporary states engage in many activities that are not captured by these five core functions. However, these five imperatives define the core of the state. This core is a zone of necessity: it constitutes an area of activity that the state simply must carry out. It features only highly restricted democratic control, because democracy connotes indeterminacy in the content of public policy. The periphery of state activity is more indeterminate, hence potentially more democratic.

It matters a great deal to a social movement whether or not it can connect its defining interest to a core state imperative. If it can, then there are in principle no limits to the degree to which the movement can penetrate to the state’s core once the movement has sought and achieved entry into the state (be it as a political party, interest group, or party faction). If it cannot, then the movement is likely to receive either symbolic or at best marginal rewards as a result of its engagement with the state. Whenever the movement’s interest comes up against the core, the movement will lose.

This situation long characterized environmentalism, locked in a zero-sum conflict with the economic imperative with a predictable losing outcome whenever it approached the state’s core (though there are exceptions: for example, in the early 1970s environmentalism in the United States secured a brief connection with the legitimation imperative, as President Nixon sought to pull the teeth of the counter-culture by
embracing its least threatening component). However, that situation may be about to change. Proponents of ecological modernization now argue that economic and ecological concerns are potentially complementary; if so, environmentalism may for the first time be linked positively to the core economic imperative. Ulrich Beck’s risk society thesis suggests a legitimation crisis that can be met by new forms of politics that effectively engage the citizenry in the selection, allocation, distribution, and amelioration of risks. If so, environmentalism may for the first time find effective linkage with the state’s legitimation imperative. These two developments could conceivably add up to a sixth state imperative: environmental conservation. The emergence of the economic imperative enabled the first democratization of the modern state through inclusion of the bourgeoisie in the core, creating the capitalist state. The emergence of the legitimation imperative further democratized the state by including the organized working class in the core, creating the welfare state. The emergence of an environmental conservation imperative would democratize the state still further by including environmentalists in the core, creating the green state.

It is this prospect we explore in a comparative study of four very different modern states. The way the story unfolds turns out to be quite different across these four states. If our analysis sometimes appears cursory, that is because it is extracted from a book-length study of the comparative history of these countries and their environmental movements.

The four countries in question are the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, and Norway. The United States is the best approximation to a passively inclusive state: there are few obstacles to, and every incentive for, a social movement to organize as an interest group and seek to exert influence within government (whether or not that influence extends to the core as we have defined it is a different question). The United Kingdom changes somewhat over time; long passively exclusive, in 1979 it began a decade of active exclusion, in which state actors tried to undermine the conditions of association in civil society. While the main targets of such attack were labor unions, environmentalists were hit too. We include the UK because, at least for ten years, it is the best example of an actively exclusive state. Germany for its part has until relatively recently been a passively exclusive state. In part this is a matter of corporatist concertation in policy making: business, government, and labor make policy together, while everyone else is shut out. Though there are more corporatist countries than Germany, there are no better approximations to passive exclusion, which in Germany is buttressed by a legalistic, organic and unitary notion of the public interest and a tradition of administrative secrecy, in light of which social movements can only appear obstructive to the proper functioning of the state. Norway has long tried to extend its corporatism to categories and concerns that in other countries would motivate social movements. In Norway they receive public funding and secure access to policy making; thus Norway is an actively inclusive state.

**Ecological Modernization**

Ecological modernization combines economics and ecology (though as will become apparent, ecology is conceptualized in somewhat thin terms). The idea is to solve environmental problems by making capitalism less wasteful and thus more sustainable,
while retaining the basic system of capitalist production and consumption. The approach to environmental problems is therefore efficiency-oriented. Because efficiency is a criterion understood by economic actors both in the public and the private sectors, the discourse of ecological modernization bridges the concerns of environmentalists, business firms, and public officials. Many environmental groups have embraced this consensual discourse because it promises to make environmental protection attractive to governments and corporations, whose cooperation is required if environmentalists are to achieve their policy aims (Hajer 1995).

Radical green critiques of technology and capitalism have been muted by the associated claim that economic growth and environmental protection can be mutually supportive. Ecological modernization thus poses a formidable challenge to environmentalists who reject purely technical solutions to environmental problems. It does, however, admit of different interpretations. The success of strategies based on securing access to policy making through the connection of movement aims to core state imperatives, we argue, depends on which of these interpretation prevails. Peter Christoff posits a continuum from weak to strong ecological modernizations, “according to their likely efficacy in promoting enduring ecologically sustainable transformations and outcomes across a range of issues and institutions” (1996: 490).

Weak ecological modernization is attractive to the state because it promises to meet its need to promote economic growth and improve environmental conditions with minimal disruption. This approach does point to the progressive inclusion of movement groups in state-based environmental policy networks, but only for moderate groups that value science-based discussion and decision-making. On this view, mature movement groups discard radical critique, informal organizational structures, and protest politics in favor of pragmatic advice, professional organizational hierarchy, and interest-group activity. As public officials and business leaders come to recognize the legitimacy of key environmental concerns, the constructive advice of professional environmental lobbying organizations will be taken seriously and help shape public policy. Those interested in radical structural change to promote environmental and democratic aims have few if any opportunities to connect their concerns to weak ecological modernization. Thus while radical environmentalism may have been important in getting environmental issues on the political agenda, its confrontational view of politics and rejection of representative democracy and economic growth are a liability for mainstream groups. The compromise-oriented discourse of ecological modernization will appeal to a wide range of government, business, and voluntary organizations, thus forging a societal consensus on sustainable development. Hajer (1996) calls this model of ecological modernization ecological modernization as institutional learning, a perspective which claims that “the dominant institutions indeed can learn and that their learning can produce meaningful change” (1996: 251). This model relies on the environmental sciences to identify strategies for integrating ecological “externalities” into the practices of industrial society. Biologists, economists, and engineers are responsible for drawing up environmental quality standards and for designing the technologies that meet these standards. The task of social scientists is to identify ways of modifying “anti-ecological” cultural patterns and behaviors. In this interpretation, ecological modernization is basically a moderate social
project (Hajer 1996: 253; for a defense of this conception of ecological modernization see Mol 1996). We will argue that weak ecological modernization ought to be of limited attractiveness to environmentalists inasmuch as it fails to deliver on its promise of connecting environmental aims to core state imperatives.

Strong ecological modernization, in contrast, is consistent with the resurgence of environmental activism. It resists the assimilation of ecology to economics, is attentive to interactions among a broad array of political, economic, and social institutions, favors communicative rationality and participatory public deliberation, pursues international cooperation, and recognizes that different conceptions of ecological modernity may be appropriate for different levels of economic development. Like Hajer’s ecological modernization as cultural politics - and, as we will see shortly, Beck’s subpolitics - strong ecological modernization seeks to recapture the radical environmental movement’s critique of industrial society, but without giving up on ecological modernization in the process. Hajer’s and Beck’s models assume that solving environmental problems requires more than social learning by existing social organizations. They agree with ecoradical critics for whom, as Hajer explains, “the emergence of ecological modernisation is not seen as the product of the maturation of the social movements. Ecological modernisation is much more the repressive answer to radical environmental discourse than its product” (Hajer 1996: 254). But Hajer and Beck reject older ecoradical prescriptions of decentralization and local participatory democracy as the building blocks of an anti-technology movement that would dismantle capitalism in order to restore a sustainable relationship between human beings and nature.

Strong ecological modernization is on the face of it more attractive from environmentalist points of view, but it may be much harder to attain. We will identify the conditions under which it makes sense for environmentalists to pursue such a strategy. We posit that state and business interests will seek to resist strong ecological modernization, and that some state structures are more likely than others to give government and industry the upper hand in this political struggle. But there is a political struggle to be engaged. As Beck explains, the politics of ecological modernization can turn out to be contentious because “the invasion of ecology into the economy opens it to politics” (1999: 100). Industry and business are forced to respond to this invasion of the economic sphere with strategies that observe “the standards of politics requiring legitimation” (Beck 1999: 101). This politicization of the economic sphere can be interpreted as a battle over the terms of ecological modernization: environmentalists aim to ecologize economics, while government and industry stress those aspects of ecological modernization that are most consistent with existing economic priorities. Our framework can illuminate the way this struggle will play out in different kinds of states.

**Risk Society**

Beck’s theory of risk society (1992; 1994) differs from ecological modernization in as much as it points to the waning influence of state structures compared to diverse “subpolitical” spaces of civil society, conceptualized as a realm of social action above the
individual and below the state, helping to constitute a “reflexive modernity”. From our point of view it therefore becomes crucial to ascertain the degree to which the state (and its imperatives) are fading in importance as a site of political action in comparison with these subpolitical spaces. For Beck, environmental movements can be understood as both products and agents of a radicalized modernity wherein state institutions lose authority because they are incapable of containing the environmentally destructive consequences of industrial society. When this happens, simple modernity metamorphoses into reflexive modernity, where industrial society confronts the unintended consequences generated by the coalition of science, technology, and economics that has been the engine of progress since the early nineteenth century. In this risk society, political conflicts surrounding the distribution of environmental “bads” supplant the old class conflict centered on the distribution of the “goods” of economic growth.

Although the transition from industrial to risk society is rooted in the economic logic of industrial society and thus unfolds more or less automatically, social movements play a crucial role in initiating industrial society’s process of self-confrontation with its own foundations. Risk society is reflexive not only in so far as the consequences of industrial society undermine its foundations. It is also reflexive in the sense of being self-critical. The onset of the radicalization of modernity does not require much in the way of conscious human agency and will in fact occur without it. But reflexive modernity enters a second stage when people become aware of and begin to reflect on the first stage. As a result of environmental activism and the public awareness of risks it generates, citizens start questioning the prospects for managing environmental crises by further reliance on economic growth and technological rationality. New possibilities for social and political transformation arise from people’s growing awareness that they are living in a society whose habits of production and consumption may be undermining the conditions for its future existence.

There is then not much difference between a strong version of ecological modernization and subpolitics. The conceptual continuum of ecological modernization corresponds to a continuum of strategies practiced by environmental movements, but the mediating influence of state structure will make some strategies from this continuum more easily available to particular groups than others. Hence the mix of movement strategies will vary across different national contexts, as will the content of public policies. The policies of ecological modernization are not available to all states equally, as we will show.

Of course, particular individuals and groups still have strategic choices to make. Movements face a wider range of choices in some countries than in others. Environmental groups can make strategic errors, but they can also reflect upon strategy in light of the impact of state structure. In practice, groups choose in terms of what makes sense to them in their historical context, though they may not phrase the issue in such terms. Hence the mix of state oriented and civil-society oriented environmental groups is likely to vary from country to country. In other words, we cannot predict which path toward ecological modernity is likely to prevail without paying close attention to state structure and its history.
State Structure and Movement Strategies: Theoretical Expectations

The reemergence of radical environmental activism in both actively exclusive (the UK since the 1980s) and, to a lesser extent, actively inclusive (the USA since 1980) states suggests that no state abiding by liberal democratic principles is capable of permanently sidelining oppositional civil society. This reality is one bright spot when it comes to the prospects for stronger ecological modernization in such societies. Nevertheless, our analysis suggests that environmentalists confronted with an actively inclusive state face the greatest challenges in achieving and sustaining reflexive ecological modernization. Movement groups working in the context of a passively exclusive state ought to have a much better shot at pursuing reflexive ecological modernization. The paradox then becomes that such states impose limits on the degree to which reflexive ecological modernization can penetrate state structures. We will show that the way history unfolds can overcome these limits – if not permanently. Also, in keeping with the subpolitics thesis, there can be more to strong ecological modernization than what is accommodated within the state.

Movement groups will be least able to connect their aims to state imperatives via strong ecological modernization where civil society has been depleted, either through the state’s actively inclusive or actively exclusive stance toward social movements. The more problematic case is actually that of active inclusion, as liberal democratic regimes appear incapable of sustaining actively exclusive strategies against societal groups for long periods of time. The emergence of vocal anti-roads protests in actively exclusive Britain is a case in point. It was not suppression of civil society based movements per se, but rather the associated entrenched free-market orientation of British politics in the 1980s and 1990s that proved in the end to be the main obstacle for environmental movement groups in the UK.

Actively inclusive states cultivate groups that in return moderate their demands in exchange for state funding and guaranteed participation in policy making. Funding and access shapes the life of associations. Hence environmental groups operating in actively inclusive states are likely to embrace weak ecological modernization, as in Norway. Environmental groups remaining outside the state-funded sector, whether by choice or lack of cultivation by the state, will be few and far between, and protests if they do exist will have little influence on public policy or anything else. Conventional and routinized forms of engagement will dominate environmental politics, and ecological modernization programs will be initiated and controlled by the state. There will be a sharply defined divide between state-oriented and non-statist groups, with little cooperation between them being the rule.

Passively exclusive states leave excluded groups alone, which, we argue, is good for a vital civil society. The threat of co-optation is weak since environmental advocacy organizations are excluded from the state’s centers of power. Unlike their counterparts in actively inclusive states, social movements can fall back on a vibrant civil society and pursue their political aims in arenas at a distance from the state. Confronted with a
broad-based environmental movement strongly rooted throughout civil society, a passively exclusive state will, we argue, be more likely than an actively inclusive one to accept strong ecological modernization strategies. That very development may in turn change the character of the state, weakening its exclusive aspect. Since even mainstream groups are less likely to risk co-optation than their counterparts in passively inclusive settings, the movement as a whole is likely to develop a dual strategy of action, involving both engagement and resistance.

Finally, passively inclusive states do not undermine the requirements for an energetic civil society. Environmental advocacy organizations that manage to gain access to state institutions, however, face a good chance of co-optation, which leads to similarly weak ecological modernization policies as in actively inclusive states. Unlike actively inclusive states, however, passively inclusive states are not as well positioned to smother a resurgence of radical environmental activism on the part of movement groups. Such groups, for example those in the grassroots environmental justice movement in the United States, may resent the “selling out” by mainstream organizations and so make different strategic choices. Such choices may be reinforced by perceptions that any inclusion on offer is not genuine.

Our analysis shows that actively inclusive states present the greatest threat to an environmental movement’s ability to preserve its “history of reflexivity.” Passive states, inclusive or exclusive, willingly or not, permit enough movement diversity to sustain commitment to a radical program consistent with the requirements of strong ecological modernization among a significant part of the environmental movement, though whether or not this translates into society actually moving in the direction of strong ecological modernization is another question altogether. In actively exclusive states, the main problem movement groups face is the lack of a vibrant civil society as the legacy of free-market capitalism and the radical individuation of society that it can entail.

**Norway: Weak Ecological Modernization and Limited Subpolitics**

Our model suggests that actively inclusive states such as Norway would foster (perhaps even create) groups willing to moderate their demands in exchange for state funding and guaranteed participation in policy making. The state would use a well developed system of operating and project grants to shape the social movement landscape to suit its own ends—that is, to ward off threats to legitimacy and economic growth. We have argued that weak ecological modernization promotes the inclusion of moderate groups (which can hardly be called NGOs) without giving them much real influence over policy decisions if their moderation waivers – meaning they have limited ability to bend the content of public policy. Radical environmental groups would for the most part remain outside the state-funded sector, but they would be few in number; strategies of direct action would pale in significance compared to more conventional forms of interest intermediation, such as representation on advisory bodies. Contrary to conventional wisdom, therefore, we expect that Norwegian environmentalists are no more likely to connect environmental values to state imperatives than their counterparts elsewhere, even though the Norwegian state has a long history of taking interest groups seriously. These
expectations are borne out. An impressive system of interconnected advisory committees preparing policy proposals for parliamentary review and passage reflects the state’s willingness to consult with organized interests. Environmental advocacy organizations have gained access to a growing number of these committees since the 1970s, reinforcing Rokkan’s description of Norway as plural corporatist. But this progressive inclusion of environmental groups is somewhat deceptive. Environmental politics in the 1980s and 1990s fits a trajectory of weak ecological modernization in that moderate groups were able to connect some of their aims to the state’s economic and legitimation imperatives, and so some policy success is apparent. Norway does comparatively well when it comes to pollution levels and energy intensiveness of national income. Yet Norway is unlikely to make any more dramatic moves in the direction of ecological sustainability. Norway follows a pattern of weak ecological modernization with limited subpolitics. Occasional episodes in the politics of hydropower (and pollution) suggest that subpolitics does exist in Norway—no liberal democratic state could ever control citizen action in civil to society to such an extent—but the past decade’s resurgence of grassroots environmentalism in the UK and the US has no parallel here. On the contrary, environmental activism has declined since inclusion reached its zenith around the issue of sustainable development in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The anti-statist environmentalism that dominated German environmental practice in the 1970s and 1980s failed to become very influential in Norway. The absence of nuclear power as an issue around which to mobilize radical opposition to the state has also left the field clear for politically moderate environmental groups. Norway is, of course, the intellectual home of the deep ecology movement. Its proponents have been suspicious of modern society in general rather than the state in particular, although Arne Naess and his students did lead several direct actions against proposed hydropower dams. Hydropower hardly inspires gloomy risk society scenarios featuring widespread chemical and nuclear pollution, although its environmental impacts—flooding of wilderness and native lands—are often severe. Opposition to hydropower has been a focal point for Norway’s modern environmental movement, prompting parts of the Norwegian environmental movement to turn to civil disobedience and other forms of direct action in the 1970s. However, more conventional forms of public interest group activity such as lobbying and public information campaigns have generally dominated, and there have been few instances of contentious politics in the 1990s.

What does this mean for environmentalists who recognize the limits of inclusion and wish to organize in civil society? An actively inclusive state, we contend, makes it difficult for new social movement groups to form independently of the state, and waning public involvement in Norway’s traditional ENGOs has coincided with only a limited resurgence of direct action. The Bellona Foundation, established in 1986, has become the leading environmental group in Norway today. In terms of organizational style this shift is dramatic. The Norwegian Society for the Conservation of Nature has been important not only in defining the country’s conservationist environmental agenda, but its local chapters have regarded the organization’s internal democracy as an important means to get people involved and communicate environmental issues in Norway. Like Greenpeace, Bellona operates more like a company than a charity: its “members” are
essentially financial supporters who lack a formal voice in the organization’s decision-making processes. Unlike Greenpeace, however, a portion of the group’s revenue has come from business interests. Given the group’s comfortable relationship to business interests, some would regard the foundation as more of a consulting firm than an environmental group (and two Bellona members did go on to establish a consultancy company). The emergence of this type of “environmental enterprise” is not unique to Norway, but lacking a strong tradition of activist organizations independent from the state this organizational form may be the only viable environmentalist response to the co-optation and decline of older groups. Whether corporate financial backing offers a more promising path than state funding remains to be seen, but on the face of it such financial dependence contradicts a central tenet of strong ecological modernization.

The United States: Some Subpolitics, Very Little Ecological Modernization

Unlike actively inclusive states, passively inclusive states are not well positioned to smother a resurgence of radical environmental activism on the part of movement groups who feel that inclusion does not deliver or resent the “selling out” by mainstream organizations. Passively inclusive states leave such groups alone, which can be good for a vital civil society. Environmental advocacy organizations that manage to gain access to state institutions can easily be co-opted, which reinforces at best weak ecological modernization, as found in actively inclusive states. The threat of co-optation does not of course apply to wings of movement that choose to keep their distance from the state’s centers of power. More easily than in actively inclusive states, social movements can emphasize action in the public sphere.

The late 1960s were years of awakening in the environmental movement. Much of the blame was going to technology-gone-wild—advancing further and faster than our understanding of its effects. Other overarching concerns included population and over-consumption. But the new science of ecology was beginning to bring the connectedness of humans and nature to the public consciousness. Andrews argues that “the most revolutionary element of this new public consciousness was a powerful awareness of the environment as a living system – a ‘web of life,’ or ecosystem” (1999: 202). This was the era when Barry Commoner’s simple aphorisms in Closing Circle (“everything is connected to everything else,” “everything must go somewhere”) became mantras of the movement. The new “whole earth” images of the planet taken by the Apollo astronauts also affected the (inter)national environmental psyche—and discourse. The “whole Earth” image added to the growing understanding of the planet as a single integrated system.

This brings us to the cusp of the environmental movement’s inclusion in the state. On New Years Day 1970, President Nixon signed the National Environmental Policy Act into law on national television, declaring the 70s the “decade of the environment.” Three weeks later, in his State of the Union address, Nixon called on the U.S. to “make peace with nature.” In February he signed an executive order directing all federal facilities to reduce their own pollution, and delivered an environmental message to Congress that laid out a thirty-seven-point program for environmental protection. In July 1970 he sent a
governmental reorganization plan to Congress that proposed integrating dispersed environmental programs under a new Environmental Protection Agency; the EPA was inaugurated in December of that year. NEPA created the President’s Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), which was charged with advising the president on environmental affairs, and the members of Nixon’s original CEQ took the initiative to shape the president’s environmental agenda in 1971-72. The final years of the Nixon presidency included a revised Clean Air Act (1970), Water Quality Improvement Act (1970), Federal Water Pollution Control Act (1972), Federal Environmental Pesticides Control Act (1972), Coastal Zone Management Act and a Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act (1972), the Endangered Species Act (1973), and the Safe Drinking Water Act (1974), among others.

The Nixon administration was under fire from a variety of social movements in these years, yet Nixon only sought to “make peace” with the environment. Nixon could embrace this one movement because it could gain him (and the state) legitimacy without going along with any of the more radical demands of the time. Certainly, the environmental movement was not a viable threat to the legitimacy of the state. But the vast outpouring of discontent manifest in the numerous movements of the time was perceived as a threat—to the state and to capitalist democracy (Huntington quote). It is not that the imperatives of the state and those of the environmental movement were identical, hence Nixon’s reluctance, but that the threat to legitimation from one direction—especially the anti-war and New Left movements—could be addressed in some way by inclusion from a different direction, namely environmentalism. By identifying his administration with the environmental cause, “Nixon explicitly sought to distinguish between the antisystem New Left and countercultural activists and the consensus-seeking effort to fix the system” (Gottlieb 1993: 109). In his State of the Union address in 1970, Nixon argued that the environment is an issue of “common cause” which would allow the nation to move “beyond factions.” Nixon was not only trying to gain some legitimacy in the face of pressure from anti-war and other activists. Certainly, he hoped that an embrace of the environmental movement would pull that movement out of the grasp of the New Left. In this, Nixon was much more successful than he ever could have imagined.

With the embrace of the state and the development of environmental laws in the 1970s came a vast expansion of possibilities for inclusion. Initially, environmentalists showed that they could simultaneously be a social movement and an interest group in the context of American politics. During the 70s, groups were both adversarial, with protests and lawsuits, and part of the growing complex of environmental management. “Environmentalists were activists and lobbyists, system opponents and system managers” (Gottlieb 1993: 316). But by the end of the 1970s, and into the 1980s, professionalism and interest group politics crowded out movement tactics.

Much has been written about the professionalization of the environmental movement in the 1980s. With the growth of environmental laws and policies, and the increase in access that came with the actions and accomplishments of the 1970s, the focus of environmentalism was firmly on high levels of the federal government.
The trajectory of the US environmental movement follows the model we have laid out: inclusion, which at many times was symbolic, came with a heavy dose of co-optation and the loss of vitality and democratic action at the grassroots. The inclusion that began around 1970 was followed by a period of ENGO professionalization with lobbying as the main strategy of action. But this inclusion and transformation of the major groups did not permanently kill grassroots environmentalism in the United States. It left a vacuum at the community level where local groups and citizens concerned with issues the major groups were not dealing with felt sidelined by the environmental movement. That very marginalization—especially after a decade or two of mainstream inclusion with little outcome on many issues of importance to communities—revitalized the grassroots. Organizations such as Earth First!, resource centers such as the Center for Health, Environment, and Justice, and networks such as the Southwest Network for Economic and Environmental Justice, along with numerous local and regional-based groups dealing with wilderness, toxics, indigenous issues, and much more, eventually grew in numbers and in strength. The late 1980s and 1990s were years of explosive growth of grassroots organization and activism in the US.

Two avenues of marginalization of the grassroots were set in place with the inclusion of the mainstream of the environmental movement. First, the governmental structure that embraced the major groups shut the door on others. When Washington had an environmental problem or question, the mainstream groups were called upon. Second, in order to continue in this role, the major groups in the movement had to sound “reasonable.” They had to speak the language of DC to be part of the conversation. This puts distance between them and the grassroots. Lois Gibbs, of the CHEJ, recalled a meeting of grassroots toxics organizers and lobbyists from the major groups:

It was hilarious... We wanted to talk about victim compensation. They wanted to talk about ten parts per billion benzene and scientific uncertainty... We were hoping that, by seeing these local folks, the people from the Big Ten would be more apt to support the grassroots position, but it didn’t work that way. They went right on with the status quo position. The Big Ten approach is to ask: What can we support to achieve a legislative victory? Our approach is to ask: What is morally correct? We can’t support something in order to win if we think it is morally wrong (quoted in Greider 1992: 214).

On a different front such moral absolutism also characterized the approach to wilderness defense of Earth First!, whose slogan was “No compromise in defense of Mother earth”. For the lobbyists, taking on the grassroots discourse and re-evaluating their own positions would put their own role as “reasonable” participants in the Washington process at risk. More radical groups who rejected the terms of “reasonable” environmental discourse therefore organized and mobilized separately. The relationship between the grassroots and the mainstream has been an uneasy one, and there have been few attempts to articulate or coordinate a conscious dual strategy. The mainstream’s inclusion in the state has brought many disappointments, but it has not robbed the movement as a whole of its
ability to “preserve its reflexivity”—even though specific organizations may have lost theirs.

As we shall see, the U.S. environmental movement is more bifurcated than its German counterpart. Passive inclusion clearly does not prevent the resurgence of grassroots activism, but it may create more rigid divides between the statist and the antistatist wings of the movement than passive exclusion. But the divide between the mainstream and the grassroots is less sharply defined in Germany also because passive exclusion has given Germany’s mainstream ENGOs far fewer opportunities for inclusion in the state, thus preserving a sense of opposition and exclusion among all environmental activists—at least until the 1998 election.

How do these developments connect with ecological modernization, be it strong or weak? The term ecological modernization is not part of US policy discourse, nor is there much in policy practice to suggest that it is being pursued under any other name. Former Vice President Al Gore once believed in something like weak ecological modernization, as indicated by his 1992 book, *Earth in the Balance*. There are sporadic initiatives that join business and environmentalists, such as those associated with Amory Lovins and his *Factor Four* (the idea that prosperity can be doubled while halving resource use), but these do not find their way into government. The terms of debate in Washington in the 1990s were set by a conservative Congressional majority for which environmental regulation is seen as a drag on the economy, such that economics and ecology remain cast in old fashioned zero-sum terms. The approach to pollution regulation remains very much ‘end of pipe”. And with few exceptions (such as the resource Advisory Councils just mentioned) the politics of land management and wilderness protection still pits old adversaries against one another (loggers, miners and ranchers on one side, environmentalists on the other). The environmental justice movement may in Lois Gibbs’s words have succeeded in “plugging the toilet” on toxic wastes, but this has not led to the creative redesign of production processes to minimize waste generation as sought even by weak ecological modernization. In short, if we seek ecological modernization in the United States we find very little, certainly when it comes to the national state and the mainstream of U.S. business. The more interesting action may be in the realm of subpolitics.

**The United Kingdom: Subpolitics by Default and Paragovernmental Ecological Modernization**

The majority of Britain’s mainstream environmental groups long cultivated relationships with government through conventional forms of lobbying. Though Britain was arguably a pioneer in anti-pollution policy in the 1950s, it was eclipsed by the United States around 1970, then subsequently left behind by its North European neighbors (Weale, 1997 in Janicke and Weidner). Thus the moderate and accommodating approach taken by the major groups eventually seemed to pay little. Radical environmental activism was rarely a feature on the British political scene.
From a governmental perspective, the combination of public inquiries, consultative bureaucratic agencies, and a moderate police response proved effective in managing environmental conflict. Before 1979 the British state occupied a fuzzy middle ground between active and passive, inclusive and exclusive. It set the terms for inclusion, but with a light touch; and any inclusion that did occur was kept well away from the state’s core and its imperatives. The available consultative opportunities meant that the exclusion of anti-nuclear groups in the 1970s, so important in stimulating movement activity in Germany and elsewhere in the 1970s, failed to stimulate comparable activism in Britain. The anti-nuclear movement was deflected by the government’s seemingly moderate response and willingness to conduct public inquiries. Thus environmental politics featured poor strategic choices by environmental groups that wasted their energy on forms of engagement with the state that produced little. One group that eventually realized this was Friends of the Earth, which eventually decided to withdraw and revitalize its oppositional stance.

Along with much else in British society, the environmental movement received a rude shock with the election of the Conservative government led by Margaret Thatcher in 1979. Though perceived as less worthy of attack than the unions, environmentalists found access to government denied. Though membership of the mainstream groups continued to increase in the 1980s (Weale, 1997, p. 97), the radical individuation of society accompanying market liberalism hindered social movement activity. Yet in spite of the effort to subdue protest and depoliticize contentious issues, the exclusionary politics of the Thatcher Government were not completely successful. Overt resistance to authoritarian populism was manifested in urban riots (1980-81) and continued opposition from unions, women’s and peace groups (Scraton 1985) – though by the late 1980s these groups were waning in activity and influence.

Not surprisingly, there was no movement in the direction of ecological modernization in the Thatcher era. Come the 1990s, environmental groups could re-enter the corridors of power as the excesses of market liberalism eased. But the British government has not adopted ecological modernization’s components as policy (Weale, 1997, p. 105). Policy making continued to be dominated by a requirement to demonstrate scientific proof of a hazard prior to policy response – the antithesis of the precautionary principle (Hajer, 1995). Environmental regulation that did exist was very much an end-of-pipe affair. Road building continued to be the focus of transportation policy, lip service to alternatives by the Blair Labour government notwithstanding. Proclaimed commitments to sustainable development in the wake of the 1992 Earth Summit were followed by little in the way of policy substance.

The 1990s saw the British state revert to a more passive orientation, mixing inclusion and exclusion. As opportunities for consultation became more plentiful in the areas of sustainable development and biodiversity in particular, the movement appeared to be settling into an increasingly moderate, institutional relationship with government.

The decade did see a growing dialogue between NGOs and business. Borrowing from Beck, Rose (1993: 294) describes this as “a sort of unpolitics.”, though a better
description is “paragovernmental activity”. In 1996 Greenpeace organized a conference for business groups to emphasize the opportunities for strategic alliances with environmental interests and the market opportunities for environmentally benign technologies (Voisey and O’Riordan 1997). Both Greenpeace and World Wide Fund for Nature have worked directly with major companies on issues such as CFC production and industrial fishing (Grove-White 1997: 18). Friends of the Earth have moved into environmental consultancy with private companies and engaged in a “green consumerism” campaign (Byrne 1997: 134). In the last decade new environmental groups have emerged to facilitate relationships with the business community, such as the Environment Council and the Forum for the Future. Unlike the Norwegian Environmental Home Guard campaign, however, these initiatives occurred without state involvement let alone state funding. These developments can be described as weak ecological modernization without government, or paragovernmental ecological modernization.

The Brent Spar campaign was a significant event in terms of the social movement’s influence upon the British state. Despite support from the British government, Shell had backed down in response to the consumer boycott and the absence of support from European governments. Grove-White (1997: 17) observes that the Brent Spar controversy essentially ‘rewrote the rules’ in British environmental politics, bypassing the government through an effective consumer campaign and illustrating ‘the mounting significance of public opinion for emerging new concerns about corporate social responsibility.’ An editorial in the Independent (21/6/95:20) similarly concluded from the campaign’s success: “It is now clear that neither governments nor big business are strong enough to withstand a new phenomenon: an alliance of direct action with public opinion” (in Spar book p 119). In Beck’s terms, the Brent Spar issue was resolved through subpolitics within civil society. It is an example of paragovernmental action (though not of ecological modernization). Meanwhile The Environment Council, a relatively new NGO, tried to facilitate dialogue between Greenpeace, Shell, and the British Government (failing with the government).

Though inclusion of the mainstream groups in the state has always been more tenuous than in the united States, their accommodation has generated a similar wave of environmental activism in Britain. Since 1992 new grassroots activist groups such as ALARM (All London Against the Road Menace) UK, Critical Mass, Reclaim the Streets and Earth First! have emerged to challenge road and airport developments, areas in which the continued lobbying and consultations by groups such as FOE and CPRE had little impact upon government policy. As academic and environmental activist Derek Wall (1999: 37) described it, “After years of green movement growth, radicals were normalized, realists marginalized and stagnation had set in. In short, by 1991, when EF! (UK) mobilized a revival of anti-roads actions in response to Roads For Prosperity, the re-creation of green radicalism had become a necessity for the green movement family.”

Doherty and Rawcliffe (1995: 247) describe this activist resurgence as “an ecological social movement” that uses activist tactics and a offers broader critique of industrialism in British society. These groups are significantly different from mainstream
environmental organizations in terms of their organization, tactics and relationship to the state. They consciously avoid the perceived trappings of organization, not just because of the tendency to develop hierarchies, but also because an identifiable decision-making body would be vulnerable to legal prosecution. Reclaim the Streets, for example, relies on word of mouth and communication through the Internet to mobilize people. Shane Collins, who was involved in the anti-roads campaign through Reclaim the Streets, emphasizes popular empowerment as a motivating factor and point of distinction from the formerly more radical Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace:

We felt Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace were basically saying to people ‘Look, join us … and we’ll sort out the problem’, and we felt that this was ultimately extremely disempowering for people, and the situation then and now is that it needs direct action, it needs people protesting, being passionate and upfront about it and making sure that the government, the roadbuilders, the globalisation capitalists … that we’re in their face (interview, 1999).

Within the direct action movement there is a sense of alienation from and opposition to the state. Support for the roads protests was bolstered by the resistance to the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, a belated example of active exclusion as government sought to attack the conditions for public association and action. Resistance to the Act drew in marginalized groups such as ravers, squatters, and new age travelers, as well as members of anti-capitalist groups such as Class War (Wall 1999: 82).

The direct action campaigns have added teeth to the well developed political lobbying and public campaigning of mainstream groups. Initially the relationship between the two sides was hostile. Direct actions group were frustrated with the conservatism and non-participatory nature of many mainstream organizations, while the mainstream for their part remained suspicious of radical activism. More recently, through their local groups Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth have engaged more productively with the direct action protesters. At the campaign against the Newbury bypass, Friends of the Earth pioneered “legal observing” of the interaction between protesters and police. Duncan McClaren of Friends of the Earth highlights how an initially difficult relationship has evolved into a much greater compatibility of interests: “From my perspective there is a great synergy between what the Direct Action people do – and the roads campaigns are a classic example of how that can work – them being in the trees and us being in the Treasury…” (interview, 1999).

While at present any alignment between movement and state via ecological modernization is a remote prospect, the environmental movement has had some success in recasting the relationship between certain development initiatives and the state’s economic imperative. In both the nuclear and transport inquiries of the 1970s environmental groups presented economic arguments. The cost of nuclear power development was subsequently—and quite ironically—highlighted through the Conservatives’ privatization program. The reluctance of the corporate world to acquire nuclear power resources emphasized their true cost, and it is this that has led to the
demise of nuclear development. With road development too, government policy in the late 1990s began to shift as the economic burden of road construction upon the state became increasingly evident (and exacerbated by the costs of dealing with increasing direct action protest). Organizations such as FoE and CPRE have consequently developed a much stronger relationship with members of Treasury.

Overall, though, the UK remains a laggard when it comes to ecological modernization, be it weak or strong, and so effective inclusion in the state’s core via that route remains unlikely. If there is real action on this front in the United Kingdom, it lies in paragovernmental but still weak ecological modernization, with subpolitics at the margins. The continuing influence of the partial and ineffective inclusion that long characterized the UK remains detrimental when it comes to anything like strong ecological modernization. The shock of active exclusion that characterized the 1980s was perhaps unfortunate in that it demonstrated to environmental groups that a return to the traditional alternative was not so bad after all.

**Germany: Stronger Ecological Modernization and the Professionalization of Subpolitics?**

New social movement protests peaked in Germany in 1983, when thousands of environmental, peace, and women’s groups carried out over 9,200 large and small mass protests (Balistier 1996). They faced, and were inadvertently fostered by, a passively exclusive state that provided no points of access for movements, but otherwise left them alone (with one or two exceptions we will note shortly). The antinuclear movement’s strategy of action in civil society of the 1970s and early 1980s was fairly successful. The proposed reactor at Whyl was never built, and public opposition to the planned nuclear reprocessing facility at Gorleben was so fierce that the conservative Lower Saxony state government gave up on the project, against the wishes of the SPD/FDP federal government.

While the 1970s were a decade of relentless protest, the 1980s saw the rise of the Green Party and the emergence of a dual strategy of action based on influencing political discourse in civil society and on using parliament to change public policy. Green MPs were first elected to parliament in 1983, in the same election that won Helmut Kohl’s CDU/FDP coalition a safe parliamentary majority. However, the Green Party’s success at the polls at first brought little more than formal presence in parliament. The unruly 1970s were followed by gradual professionalization. As the Green Party’s parliamentary spokeswoman for the environment explains:

Sixty-eighthers—members of the peace and anti-nuclear movements—are getting older. These people no longer attend protest marches. Young people today tend to be apolitical and have a different relationship to the state. **And the state itself has changed for the better so that radical opposition is no longer necessary.** Politically motivated young people are more likely to seek change through conventional political channels such as interest groups and parties (Hustedt, interview).
As in Norway, interest in environmental issues has declined since the 1992 Rio summit, and with the 1998 election of an SPD/Green coalition government, German ENGOs have had to revise upward their assessment of the prospects for pursuing their ends through ecological modernization. Nostalgia for direct action does not trump enthusiasm for ecological modernization, or vice versa. Environmentalists readily concede their diminished capacity for mobilizing mass protests. The political embarrassment caused by a low turnout may destroy any benefits to be derived from organizing a protest march in the first place (Musiol, interview). Changes in public policy and political culture may be responsible for the decline of social movement activity. On the one hand, stricter government regulations have dramatically reduced acute forms of water, air, and soil pollution (Jänicke and Weidner 1997). On the other hand, nuclear energy—once the chief cause of environmental mobilization—has suffered serious setbacks, culminating in the SPD/Green government’s plan for gradual phase-out. This plan, which envisions that few if any plants will be taken off the grid immediately, is a compromise that aims to balance the state’s economic and legitimation needs, but it is hard to see how even this could have happened without the prior new social movement activity.

Critics argue that parliamentary representation has brought mostly symbolic gains at the cost of taming the Greens’ radicalism. Inclusion does of course favor groups with moderate rather than radical agendas (Tarrow 1998). The pragmatists who rule the party today reject ecoradical goals and embrace the aim of ecologically modernizing the country’s social-market economy. In keeping with this transformation, Green MPs today have a more polished look than the diverse group of nonconformists who wore jeans and sweaters on the floor of parliament in 1983. The erstwhile “antiparty” has changed parliament while having absorbed the institution’s norms and values. Fundis view the party’s professionalization as evidence for the iron law of oligarchy in action (Tiefenbach 1998), while Reals welcome the same trend as a prerequisite of political efficacy and electoral success (Offe 1998; Raschke 1993).

More than in most countries, the discourses of sustainable development and ecological modernization have come to dominate environmental politics in Germany. At issue is an “ecological transformation of industrial society” not its abolition. The environmental movement’s confrontational strategies of the late 1970s have given way to a preference for environmental policy tools that rely on market-based ecological incentives (Zittel 1996). Subpolitics is by no means dead, but it goes hand in glove with strategies of ecological modernization. Environmental advocacy organizations willing to support the project of the ecological modernization of the economy have, after a long struggle, gained access to the state, whose passively exclusive character they have diluted. But radical groups such as BBU still face passive exclusion. Their role in subpolitical activity has been largely supplanted by a burgeoning sector of for-profit environmental consultancies. Public agencies and firms interested in ecologically sustainable development increasingly bypass traditional ENGOs altogether in favor of these for-profit consultancies for information and advice.

Mainstream ENGOs regard ecological modernization as the best means of securing the role of environmental values in politics and economy even though environmental issues no longer occupy the top of the political agenda, taking a back seat to economic policy. The problem is that their only hope of success lies in the force of the better argument coupled with public support for a cleaner environment:
As a rule, ENGOs haven’t figured prominently in ministerial decisions. I am not optimistic that this is about to change: business simply has greater influence. Business lobbying organizations are so strong that ENGOs—even well funded ones like NABU—can hardly keep up (Kühr, interview).

ENGOs believe their ability to shape public policy against the wishes of business associations and labor unions waxes and wanes in direct proportion to public concern for environmental issues. The dominance of business in environmental policy debates further derives from the fact that individual firms must implement the policies demanded by ENGOs and enacted by state officials. In that context, it makes sense for ENGOs wishing to be seen as “reasonable” partners in policymaking to embrace conceptions of environmentalism that seek to bridge the gap between business and environmental protection. A veteran environmental scientist and Social Democrat member of parliament summarizes the challenge as follows:

The situation is completely different today: local environmental protests and the spirit of unruliness are gone. But environmental calamities reach all areas of life. Keeping them politically alive requires scientific proof that there is no necessary contradiction between ecology and the economy. If you can piggyback the issue of the environment onto the dominant issue of the economy, the environment will have a chance again. For all intents and purposes, it is no longer possible to argue for the environment against the opposition of business (von Weizsäcker, interview).

Germany’s passively exclusionary system of corporatism has not altogether kept an ecological imperative off the political agenda. But having been filtered through policymakers’ search for a rationalist consensus, that imperative is a far cry from that championed by the citizens’ initiatives of the 1970s. Still, representatives of pragmatically inclined ENGOs claim the state and certain sectors of the economy have become less resistant to environmental change, particularly where reaching environmental goals does not go too far in violating economic constraints. Nuclear power is a dramatic case in point. Nuclear energy is an area where antinuclear movement and the economic imperative long conflicted. But following forty years of federal support for nuclear energy, after the 1998 election environmentalists suddenly had the federal government on their side on this issue—up to a point. The SPD/Green government’s commitment to end the nuclear energy program signals the persistent political influence of the antinuclear movement. However, it is economics ministry officials and nuclear industry representatives who have negotiated the terms of ending the program, with environmentalists and the environment ministry apparently sidelined. These talks have once more reminded environmentalists of the limits of participating in government. The Greens are the junior coalition party with a popular vote of only 6.3 percent to boot. They may be too weak to get the SPD to enact aggressive environmental policies, at the risk of first mollifying and later alienating their allies in civil society. For ENGOs, the existence of an SPD/Green government raises more troubling questions about the wisdom of pursuing a dualistic strategy than did the CDU/FDP coalition of 1983 to 1998, which had a less overt commitment to ecologizing the economy.
Ecological modernization has not killed subpolitical activities altogether, although the latter have been thoroughly professionalized. One of the movement’s response to the state’s exclusionary strategy of the 1970s and early 1980s was to establish environmental policy institutions outside the state. The Working Group of Ecological Research Institutes alone comprises approximately eighty institutes (Hey and Brendle 1994: 133). Thus, the Institute for Applied Ecology, founded in 1977, sought to meet the demand for scientific and technical data that could be used to support plaintiffs challenging environmentally questionable industrial facilities in the courts. Additional independent ecological research institutes were established in subsequent decades. Examples include the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment, and Energy and the Potsdam Institute for Climate Research. These two research organizations receive part of their funding from the federal government. While they do not share the movement origins of the Institute for Applied Ecology, they contribute information and proposals to environmental policy debates. Politically, they counterbalance the various state agencies charged with gathering and interpreting environmental data for the public bureaucracy.

The movement’s earlier battle with industry has turned into a “critical dialogue” rooted in the shared discourse of sustainable development. Germany’s big businesses, particularly utilities and chemical companies, have not budged very much from their negative view of environmentalists, and vice versa. Although both NABU and the Institute for Applied Ecology have accepted eco-sponsoring agreements and entered into eco-auditing contracts with large firms, many environmentalists believe the greatest potential for making an impact lies with medium-sized firms, where managers have greater freedom over setting company policy than do managers in publicly held corporations beholden to the stock market as well as politically conservative managers and supervisory boards. This is not to say that environmentalists and managers share the same conception of sustainable development. In fact, acceptance of sustainable development by major industrial associations is seldom more than superficial (Streese, interview). However, that some corporations are willing to discuss environmental measures and have accepted sustainability as their guiding principle indicates a cultural shift in power relations in favor of environmentalists and gives some credence to the ecological modernization thesis. This shift has transformed the terms on which social actors contest competing conceptions of the balance among economic development, social welfare, and environmental protection.

In addition to this sort of “unpolitics,” informal but close contacts to key members of government and parliament are an alternative path of influence for environmentalists. ENGOs enjoy better access to public officials as a result of the Greens’ participation in parliament and government, although activists say that opportunities for access to and influence in the SPD/Green federal government have remained far behind expectations (Musiol, interview). But improved access to public officials creates as many problems for environmentalists as it solves. While such inclusion softens formerly rigid ideological frontlines, it does not necessarily entail the ability to control outcomes. The inertia of Germany’s federalist and the legal corporatist political structures is not easily overcome by a change of government.
Our interviews show that Green politicians and environmental activists are today acutely aware of how much the success, however limited, of their agenda has depended on public pressure based on mobilization in civil society. They are not sure that access to institutionalized participation in parliamentary and administrative venues can replace this crucial resource. But our activist respondents were also doubtful about ENGOs’ ability to reach out to an increasingly passive or downright indifferent public. Rekindling social movement mobilization in civil society from above is something of a contradiction in terms. As if to underline this quandary, the press release appears to have replaced the protest march as the most potent weapon in the arsenal of Germany’s major environmental advocacy organizations.

Green MPs tend to believe the decline of mass protests is the price environmentalists have had to pay for their success. On this view, organized environmental interest representation in the political system, whether as political parties or advocacy groups, depresses mobilization in civil society by virtue of its existence. The growth of reasonably professional networks of environmental advocacy organizations signals to people that their personal involvement and protest are no longer required. The withdrawal of these people from activism, however, reduces the effectiveness of these environmental policy networks. The paradox the Greens face is this: the better the environmental policy results politicians manage to negotiate, the more difficult it is to organize mass protests, even though further environmental policy progress actually requires further sustained public support (Hermann, interview). Green expertise in parliament without adequate political power is not enough. As Joself Fall explains, “Meaningful environmental protection encounters tremendous resistance in the wider society. Without outside support, we don’t have any way of achieving our goals” (interview).

The pattern of movement history, then, is one of radical beginnings followed by the formation of a political party that has become a permanent presence on the German electoral landscape, together with the creation of environmental advocacy groups, some of which have close ties to the Greens but all of which have kept an independent organizational and political identity. These ENGOs do not have the discursive and democratic vitality of the social movements of the 1970s and 1980s. Given that the Greens were in opposition until 1998—and lacked an effective parliamentary presence 1990-1994—and limited opportunities for ENGO inclusion in environmental policymaking, professionalized subpolitics became a mainstay of ENGO activity alongside the state’s modest ecological modernization program. Unlike some among the US environmental justice movement and radical wilderness defenders, German ENGOs active in civil society do not reject the country’s consensus-seeking, rationalist discourse and policy style. The discourse of German environmental politics, state-centered or not, fits the give-and-take between expertise and counterexpertise described in Beck’s model of ecological democracy. As noted above, some environmentalists’ hopes of special treatment by the Red/Green government have been disappointed. In the long run this could help them pursue a viable dualistic strategy vis-à-vis a left-of-center/green government for whom the environment is not as central an issue as environmentalists would like. One activist predicted that ENGOs would grant the government a grace
period of a year or two before cranking up the heat if necessary (Laing, interview). Few believed that co-optation was going to be a serious problem for ENGOs.

Germany has, then, experienced stronger ecological modernization than the other three countries in this study, however short it may fall of Christoff’s ideal type. This experience in turn has enabled more effective connection of environmental movement interests to core state imperatives than in the UK, USA, and Norway. These developments were facilitated by the passively exclusive character of the German state, which provided the space and impetus for a green public sphere to develop. Ironically, strong ecological modernization is advanced as exclusion diminishes with the entry of environmental NGOs into the state and the Greens into government. How long will this combination of circumstances persist? Our structural and historical analysis could be deployed to suggest that this state of affairs is unstable, because it is conditional on the recent experience and memory of an autonomous green public sphere. If so, Germany may lapse into passive inclusion of the American sort, with an associated weakening of ecological modernization. Alternatively, it could develop a kind of environmental corporatism that includes a green elite, but passively excludes others. The latter would not necessarily be a bad outcome, possibly constituting a further turn of the historical spiral in which passive exclusion means a revitalized public sphere – which in turn might go the way of the social movements of the 1970s and 1980s. But that is to look too far into the future.

Conclusion

If we array our four countries according to the degree they have achieved strong ecological modernization and associated subpolitics, and by implication the degree of connection this reveals between environmental movement interests and core state imperatives, then Germany is in front. Germany has reaped the benefits of a history of passive exclusion, though how long it can continue to do so remains unclear. Norway may be ranked second, but only on the dimension of ecological modernization, which it is pursuing in weak form. But nothing stronger can be envisaged for Norway, and no subpolitics is apparent. Ecological modernization plays little part in public policy making in the UK and USA, though paragovernmental ecological modernization in the UK would put it just in front of the USA. In the USA, national politics still features an old-fashioned standoff between economy and environment. The USA featured by far the strongest connection between environmental values and core state imperatives around 1970, but that peak has not been attained since.

At first sight it might seem paradoxical, but on reflection understandable, that in the 1990s we see a resurgence of environmental activism in the ecological modernization laggards, the USA and UK. This resurgence occurs despite the passively inclusive character of the US state that ought to absorb and neutralize radicalism, and despite the recovery of the UK from the active exclusion of the Thatcher era. These developments themselves indicate the waning of structural determinism: state structure may be less important than it once was in determining the form taken by social movements. This in turn indicates heightened reflexivity. That is, activists can look to the history of inclusion
and see what it has an, more to point, has not accomplished, and draw lessons for their own orientation to the state.

We began with a speculation that an emerging connection of environmental values to both economic and legitimation imperatives to help constitute a green state with a conservation imperative could constitute a development on a par with two prior transformations of the modern state. These prior transformations were the alignment of the defining interest of the bourgeoisie with an emerging economic imperative to constitute the capitalist state, and the linkage of the defining interest of the organized working class with an emerging legitimation imperative to constitute the welfare state. Our conclusion is that such a connection remains insecure inasmuch as it is contingent on the presence of an active oppositional public sphere, if only as a recent memory (as in Germany). (American and British observers might point out that in this its situation is no so different from a welfare state that continuously has to be fought over and for, and has been eroded when its corresponding public sphere has been depleted or co-opted. But countries such as Norway and Germany show that a welfare state can be sustained without an oppositional public sphere.) Ecological modernization in its weak form does not require such an oppositional sphere, as the case of Norway shows. Yet we would hesitate to describe a state pursuing weak ecological modernization as a green state. Finally, the resurgence of environmental activism in the structurally inhospitable contexts of the USA and UK suggests that reflexively aware activists and movements may be able to tweak the historical logic.