

Hegemony and Articulations of the Ecologically Noble Savage

An analysis of Greenpeace and *Our Common Future's* hegemonic articulations of
environmentalism

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UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

JUNE 2018

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the figure of the ‘Ecologically Noble Savage’ as employed by Greenpeace and UN in the report *Our Common Future* (1987). In this thesis, this figure is understood as a re-articulation of the older figure of the Noble Savage from European anthropological and cultural history. Greenpeace and the UN bring this figure into a modern context of environmentalism thereby creating the ‘Ecologically Noble Savage’. The thesis also shows how this new figure relies on and reproduces features of its older version. The thesis is informed by the work of the social anthropologist Vassos Argyrou in *The Logic of Environmentalism* (2005). This book explores the evolution of environmentalism and concurrent shifts in worldviews and perspectives as reflected in various writings by environmentalists, including Greenpeace and *Our Common Future*. The analysis is informed by and applies the political theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe as outlined in their seminal work *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985). Within this theoretical framework, the thesis investigates how Greenpeace and *Our Common Future* textually construct the Ecologically Noble Savage as an element of their hegemonic articulations of environmentalism and what function this figure serves in these articulations. Thus, the thesis aims to expand upon Argyrou’s analysis through the application of Laclau and Mouffe’s theory.

Foreword and Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor John Ødemark for his excellent guidance and support during both the planning for and writing this thesis. You have practically been my mentor for the past two years and have always helped steer me towards fruitful inquiry and academic pursuits. I would also like to thank both the Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas and the Department of Cultural Studies and Oriental Languages for the support they provided throughout my master's program. Ellen Krefting and Anne Eriksen deserve extra commendation for creating and maintaining the high quality of the master's program in European Culture at UiO. I would like to thank Isak Emberland for his support during countless hours of writing. Whenever I lost motivation and interest in the project, you always provided wise counsel and consolation which helped me get back on track. I would also like to thank Benjamin Madley at UCLA Department of History; this thesis would not have happened without your inspiring lectures in Native American history and postcolonial history. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends who always provided support and debated issues with me whenever I needed it.

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1. Introduction

In 1971, a crew of 12 protestors sailed off in a small boat from Vancouver, Canada to attempt to stop a nuclear weapons test that the US planned to conduct. The group called themselves the Don't Make a Wave Committee but changed their name to the Greenpeace Foundation the following year. Robert Hunter, one of the younger members of the crew, recounted in his chronicle of events how a Native American myth inspired him to protest the test:

I had on board a copy of a well-worn pamphlet containing a collection of North American Indian prophecies and myths. It had been given to me, rather mysteriously, by a Jewish dulcimer maker who described himself as a gypsy and predicted that the book would reveal a "path" that would affect my life. It contained one particular prophecy made some two hundred years ago by an old Cree grandmother named Eyes of Fire, who saw a time coming when birds would fall out of the skies, the fish poisoned in their streams, the deer would drop in their tracks in the forest, and the seas would be "blackened"-all thanks to the White Man's greed and technology. At that time, the Indian people would have all but completely lost their spirit. They would find it again, and they would begin to teach the White Man how to have reverence for Mother Earth. Together, using the symbol of the rainbow, all the races of the world would band together to spread the great Indian teaching and go forth-Warriors of the Rainbow-to bring an end to the destruction and desecration of sacred Earth.¹

Over a decade later, the UN published the report *Our Common Future* (1987). The report expresses a melancholic sentiment about the faith of 'so-called indigenous and tribal peoples':

These communities are the repositories of vast accumulations of traditional knowledge and experience that links humanity with its ancient origins. Their disappearance is a loss for the larger society, which could learn a great deal from the traditional skills in sustainably managing very complex ecological systems. It is a terrible irony that as formal development reaches more deeply into rain forests, deserts, and other isolated environments, it tends to destroy the only cultures that have proved able to thrive in these environments.²

How did Greenpeace come to adopt Native American prophecies and myths as a source of inspiration? And why would a political institution such as the UN make the connection

¹ Hunter, Robert. *Warriors of the Rainbow: A Chronicle of the Greenpeace Movement from 1971 to 1979*. Amsterdam: Freemantle Press, 2011. 44.

² The World Commission on Environment and Development (WECD). *Our Common Future*. UK, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987. 114-115.

between environmentalism and indigenous people? This thesis attempts to answer these questions.

Topics that relate to environmentalism have increasingly become objects of study for various fields within both the social sciences and humanities. Some scholars have claimed that humanities will become more important for formulating problems and solutions within the context of environmentalism.³ Research and analysis of environmentalism-related texts from the perspective of political and literary text analysis can supply crucial insight into the tropes and figures that dominate public discussion on the topic. The political field of environmentalism has become a ‘middle ground’ where there is a ‘construction of a mutually comprehensible world characterized by new systems of meaning and exchange’⁴

The passages cited above, which convey that Native American mythology and indigenous culture have entered into discourses on environmental topics, serve as examples of this middle ground. In many cases, commentators, activists and politicians have relied on the concept of the ‘Noble Savage’, which reflects older notions of so-called ‘primitive’ peoples in the European tradition, in the construction of a cross-cultural middle ground between the West and indigenous peoples. More recently, the reincarnation of this figure from an older European anthropological and cultural thought has been dubbed the ‘Ecologically Noble Savage’.⁵ This thesis explores and analyses how Greenpeace and *Our Common Future* have (re)articulated the Noble Savage as the Ecologically Noble Savage.

Today, Greenpeace a well-known organisation with a global membership of over 2.8 million people.⁶ The activities of Greenpeace shortly after its founding in the 1970s and the texts that are associated with these activities reveal the affinity for and importance of Native American mythology and culture. The founders of Greenpeace packaged their activism in imagery and motifs that derived from these inspirations, thereby introducing this element to the context of environmentalism activism.

The UN has become the main international institution for governing environmental affairs. The book *Our Common Future* (1987), which resulted from the work of the Brundtland Commission (officially named the World Commission on Environment and

³ Sörlin, Sverker. “Environmental Humanities: Why Should Biologists Interested in the Environment Take the Humanities Seriously?” *BioScience*, Volume 62, Issue 9, 1 September 2012, 788–789.

⁴ Conklin, Beth A., and Laura R. Graham. “The Shifting Middle Ground: Amazonian Indians and Eco-Politics.” *American Anthropologist*, vol. 97, no. 4, 2009, pp. 695–710. 696.

⁵ Ødemark, John. “Avatar in the Amazon - Narratives of Cultural Conversion and Environmental Salvation between Cultural Theory and Popular Culture.” *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2015, pp. 455–478. 460.

⁶ Greenpeace USA. “About.” *Greenpeace USA*, web.

Development, or WCED) that the UN established in 1984, marked a significant expansion of environmental concerns into the general political domain.⁷ The book and the work of the commission are still prominent, but the term ‘sustainable development’, which the book popularised, is even more popular and has become ubiquitous in not only environmental policy but also other areas under the umbrella of ‘development’.⁸ *Our Common Future* represents one of the first serious and comprehensive attempts by the UN to address environmental problems caused by human activity. The text provides both diagnosis and solutions for a set of problems regarding environmentalism and development. Moreover, it was the first case of an explicit connection between environmentalism and indigenous people in the context of the UN.⁹

1.1 The Ecologically Noble Savage: From Nature and Man to the Environment and Human Beings

The figure of the Noble Savage has a long history within the European traditions of anthropology, ethnography and cultural theory. Historians have often attributed the concept to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, although Marc Lescarbot, a French lawyer and ethnographer, had already coined the phrase in 1609.¹⁰ The figure has a rather complex origin, as Rousseau himself never explicitly used the phrase ‘Noble Savage’.¹¹ However, it is outside the scope of this thesis to critique the history of reception of the figure of the Noble Savage and nuance who created the concept and when.¹² Even though Rousseau did not explicitly employ the term, I claim that the figure is implicit within his writing. For the purposes of this thesis, I consider Rousseau’s ‘primordial man’ to be the canonical example of the ‘Noble Savage’ as a textual figure in European cultural history.

While I apply this phrase in the analysis of the Greenpeace documents and UN texts, I do not make empirical claims about those who self-identify as indigenous peoples today. Rather, the question is how these texts rely on this figure derived from European cultural history. Indigenous people did not participate in the writing of neither the Greenpeace texts

⁷ Smith, Heather. “The World Commission on Environment and Development: Ideas and institutions intersect.” *International commissions and the power of ideas*. Ed. Thakur, Ramesh. Tokyo, Japan: UN University Press, 2005. 76-98.

⁸ “Sustainable Development Goals.” *United Nations Foundation*, web.

⁹ Argyrou, Vassos. *The Logic of Environmentalism: Anthropology, Ecology, and Postcoloniality*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2005. 67.

¹⁰ Ellingson, Ter. *The Myth of the Noble Savage*. Berkeley California: University of California Press, 2001. xiii-xv.

¹¹ Ellingson 1.

¹² See Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (2001) for a detailed critique of the reception of the figure.

nor *Our Common Future*. As articulations attempting to establish equivalence between the struggles of Indigenous peoples and environmentalism, both thus make claims about those who identify as Indigenous people today. As in Rousseau's work, the phrase 'Noble Savage' is not explicitly present in the texts; nevertheless, this thesis contends that one can identify features of the Greenpeace texts and *Our Common Future* that implicitly borrow from earlier texts.

Rousseau employed the figure of the Noble Savage in an attempt to found a science of anthropology.¹³ The purpose of the new science was to critique 18th-century European society by separating 'that which is original from that which is artificial in man's present nature'.¹⁴ Rousseau therefore constructed an image of a primordial man – alternatively referred to as a 'natural' or 'savage' man – to which he compared his contemporary man in order to separate the original from the artificial. Although he made it clear that the primordial man is a fictional construction, he nevertheless relied on ethnographic data that were gathered by European colonists and ethnographers in order to construct this image of man in a 'state of nature'.¹⁵ Rousseau aimed his critique at philosophers, such as Thomas Hobbes, whom he believed to erroneously interpret the vices of civilisation as stemming from human nature:

The philosophers who have examined the foundations of society have all felt it necessary to go back to the state of nature, but none of them has succeeded in getting there... [A]ll these philosophers talking ceaselessly of need, greed, oppression, desire and pride have transported into the state of nature concept formed in society. They speak of savage man and they depict civilized man...¹⁶

Therefore, the goal was to correct the misconception that the vices of civilisation had their origin in the 'state of nature' rather than in contemporary society. According to Rousseau, the primordial man was more fortunate than the civilised man to some degree, as he was not burdened by abstract concepts of good and evil, corrupted desires and the complexities of large hierarchical societies.¹⁷ Unlike the primordial man, civilised men could 'no longer nourish themselves on herbs and nuts, nor do without laws and rules'.¹⁸

Through this contrast between the primordial man and civilized man, Rousseau reproduces an event in human history akin to a biblical 'fall'. Specifically, the advent of

¹³ Ellingson 80.

¹⁴ Ellingson 81.

¹⁵ Ellingson 81.

¹⁶ Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *A Discourse on Inequality*. London: Penguin Group, 1984. 87.

¹⁷ Ellingson 82.

¹⁸ Rousseau 154.

civilisation prompted this ‘fall’ from primordial innocence and introduced vice into society. However, Rousseau did not advocate for ‘redemption’ in the form of a return to a primordial state because the ‘passion’ of civilized men ‘have destroyed their original simplicity forever’.¹⁹ Instead, he proposed, humans can only improve their condition through critiques of society, which necessitate a separation of the ‘artificial’ from the ‘original’. Thus, humankind needs the ‘Noble Savage’ as a constant point of comparison for its present situation.

Since the latter half of the 20th century, sources ranging from academic scholarship to online blogs have criticised the figure as a stereotype of non-Western peoples.²⁰ Such criticisms have accused Rousseau and other writers of engaging in Western ethnocentrism, and they have problematised the racial and ethnic implications that are inherent to the figure. The romantic imagery of certain non-Western peoples as living in harmony with nature and being untroubled by materialistic concerns is a potentially harmful stereotype that contributes to the marginalisation of indigenous peoples by obscuring relations of domination and exploitation between the West and ‘the rest’. Furthermore, the stereotype downplays the long history of contact between the West and indigenous peoples and potentially justifies the exclusion of said peoples from political processes that are associated with aspects of ‘modern’ life that do not belong to their traditions. The same critiques are applicable to both Greenpeace and *Our Common Future*, though this relevance is not the primary concern of the thesis. The concern is instead on analysing the various functions the figure plays in each text. This paper assumes a non-essential character of ‘traditional peoples’, ‘indigenous peoples’ or those who have often been identified with the Noble Savage; in other words, there is no common essence among all who have been identified with or have been otherwise defined within the categories that are associated with the Noble Savage.

The figure of the Noble Savage plays a role in the articulations of Greenpeace and *Our Common Future*. Laclau and Mouffe have explained that all of the ‘new social movements’, which all embody some sort of ‘new antagonisms’, are, to a certain extent,

expressions of resistance to the commodification, bureaucratization and increasing homogenization of social life itself [which] explains why they should frequently manifest themselves through a proliferation of particularisms, and crystallize into a demand for autonomy itself.²¹

¹⁹ Ellingson 83.

²⁰ Ellingson 336.

²¹ Laclau, Ernesto, and Chantal Mouffe. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. 2nd ed., London: Verso, 2001. 164.

Because of the logic of this resistance, such ‘new social movements’ have tended towards the ‘valorization of “differences” and the creation of new identities which tend to privilege “cultural” criteria (clothes, music, language, regional traditions, and so on)’. This dynamic, which I elaborate on in the Theory and Method chapter, awards the ‘Noble Savage’ a special place within these two articulations. Unlike Greenpeace, the UN is not under the umbrella of ‘new social movements’; however, I argue that *Our Common Future* responds to the emergence of such movements. The text thus shares some of these tendencies with the ‘new social movements’.

To understand how Greenpeace and the UN have incorporated the ‘Noble Savage’ into discourses on environmentalism, I rely on cultural anthropologist Vassos Argyrou’s text *The Logic of Environmentalism* (2006). This book explores the evolution of environmentalism and concurrent shifts in worldviews and perspectives as reflected in various writings by environmentalists, including Greenpeace and *Our Common Future*. According to Argyrou, *Our Common Future* represents a break with a ‘modern paradigm’,²² and Greenpeace’s use of the ‘Rainbow Warriors’ evidences a shift to a new paradigm in the conception of nature as well as a concurrent shift in the role of so-called ‘primitives’.²³ I retrace some of Argyrou’s analysis of Greenpeace and *Our Common Future*. This both informs this thesis and serves as its point of departure, and part of my aim is to expand upon his insights.

The Logic of Environmentalism illustrates how the implicit worldview of environmentalism discourse represents a reversal in the Western understanding of ‘nature’ and ‘man’. Before this reversal, nature was perceived as

an intractable domain of utility and danger, which in the language of nineteenth century would have it, was to be mastered, tamed, brought under ‘man’s’ control, bent to his will, forced to reveal her secrets, compelled to satisfy his needs and minister to his happiness.²⁴

Argyrou has referred to this view of nature and of ‘man’ as a manipulator and extractor as the ‘modern paradigm’. During the 1950s or 1960s, however, a shift occurred in both the mainstream view of nature and those more narrowly concerned with environmentalism. In this new paradigm, nature is not a ‘state’ (as in ‘the state of nature’) but is instead

a system of immense complexity that hinges on a precarious balance currently under severe strain, a fragile domain of life that must be protected and cared for, both for its own sake and ours.²⁵

²² Argyrou 46.

²³ Argyrou 66.

²⁴ Argyrou vii.

²⁵ Argyrou vii.

Argyrou has argued that both Greenpeace and *Our Common Future* embody this ‘new’ paradigm. United Nations documents that preceded *Our Common Future* were more confident that humans could utilise science to alter nature according to their will, but this perspective changed by the 1980s. Argyrou has not given a name to the paradigm that replaces the modern, but in view of the emphasis on the value of Earth for its ‘own sake’ and the sacralising descriptions that accompany this emphasis, I term it the ‘sacred Earth paradigm’. Although it is outside the scope of this thesis to prove or refute this shift, the notion of such a shift could serve as a helpful analytical tool. Both Greenpeace and *Our Common Future* explicitly advance a radical new view of nature on the level of a ‘Copernican Revolution’. Thus, the notion of a paradigm shift is also a discursive concept that these two texts employ.

This re-conceptualisation of nature has also prompted a shift away from the concept of ‘man’ in favour of that of the ‘human being’. The modern paradigm positioned ‘man’ as a creature above nature and, accordingly, the subject to dominate and alter the environment according to his own will. The sacralising of Earth instead presents the concept of the ‘human being’, who is instead ‘a being among other beings in the world’. As such, he is dependent upon nature and is sometimes at its mercy.²⁶ This shift also changed conceptions of ‘savage’ and ‘backwards’ people. Those who did not ‘master’, ‘tame’ or ‘bend’ nature in the way that industrialised states had achieved under the ‘modern paradigm’ were regarded as relics of previous stages of human society in comparison to European or Western societies. With the sacralising of Earth, those who do not manipulate nature according to their own will are no longer considered ‘backwards’ or ‘savage’ but rather ‘have been transformed into those who will “enlighten” the world with this forgotten wisdom and can therefore be called, without the risk of misunderstanding, “indigenous and traditional peoples”.’²⁷ Argyrou has argued that Greenpeace’s use of the prophecy that is apparent in the passage above is an example of this new understanding.

The transformation of ‘savages’ into ‘indigenous and traditional peoples’ has altered interpretations of the religious and spiritual belief systems of people within these groups. Nineteenth-century European anthropologists, such as E.B. Taylor, perceived the practices and beliefs of so-called ‘primitives’ in European colonies to be irrational and lacking

²⁶ Argyrou viii.

²⁷ Argyrou viii.

distinction between the natural and supernatural.²⁸ In the West and Europe, however, these anthropologists believed that science and reason advanced humankind's view of the world by enabling a separation of the natural from the supernatural. At the beginning of the 20th century, a few decades after Taylor, anthropologists such as Franz Boas, Bronisław Malinowski and Claude Levi-Strauss increasingly highlighted the ethnocentrism in the idea that such people were simply irrational.²⁹ Instead, they interpreted the practices and beliefs of indigenous communities 'metaphorically'. For example, they understood practices such as witchcraft to have symbolic instead of literal meanings. This perspective assumed that practitioners of witchcraft did not necessarily believe that they could perform magic; rather, such rituals have symbolic value and social functions to uphold the social order.³⁰ In this way, such practices and beliefs became consistent with scientific understandings of the world, and scholars such as Boas could seemingly avoid the charge of ethnocentrically dismissing such practices as 'irrational'.

However, Argyrou has noted that environmentalists – especially those in the radical strains of the movement – have further rejected Western ethnocentrism and embraced indigenous practices and beliefs. With the sacred Earth paradigm, environmentalists have literally rather than metaphorically interpreted claims that animals, plants, lakes and rivers have souls or personhood in the same way as humans. In contrast, the modern paradigm views nature as a disenchanted domain and considers all objects and beings to simply be atomic particles in a void that is bounded by natural laws. Accordingly, it assumes no objective existence of souls, wills or intentions in animals, plants, lakes or rivers, as it would be absurd for them to have such qualities. This view was eventually also charged with ethnocentrism, and scholars like Murray Bookchin have regarded this so-called³¹ Western scientific worldview as only one of many ways to perceive the world.³² According to Argyrou, certain strains of environmentalism have incorporated this concern into their articulation of politics. Proponents of this kind of environmentalism have even considered it arrogant to build a dam in a river, as this action assumes that the river has no intentionality or 'telos' aside from the

²⁸ Argyrou 63.

²⁹ Argyrou 64-65.

³⁰ Cf. Argyrou *Anthropology And The Will To Meaning* (2002).

³¹ There category 'Western scientific worldview' is rather simplistic and often serves as a strawman, but for the purposes of this discussion these nuances are not that relevant because the focus is on the way environmentalists understand themselves.

³² Argyrou 53.

benefits it can offer humans.³³ This view suggests that the river ‘wants’ to flow freely into the ocean, and preventing that would be an act of hubris on the part of human beings.

I apply the term ‘Ecologically Noble Savage’ to the re-articulations of the Noble Savage by *Our Common Future* and Greenpeace in modern discourse on environmentalism. One could potentially apply the term to Rousseau’s ‘primordial man’ to claim that this figure shares characteristics that reflect ecological awareness. Still, I argue that ‘ecologically’ is a discursive construct that originated in the latter half of the 20th century, and distinguishing between the Noble Savage with and without this adjective stresses the contextual differences between the uses of the figure.

1.2 The Sources: Two Cases of the Ecologically Noble Savage

This thesis explores how the figure of the Noble Savage has appeared in texts that Greenpeace produced in the 1970s and the UN released in the 1980s. Early Greenpeace and *Our Common Future* share this figure as a key element in their attempt to articulate new political projects that concern environmentalism. In view of this, a parallel analysis of these two cases may offer valuable insight into differences between the two kinds of political formations within environmentalism. Furthermore, variations in the use of the figure might reveal how the UN and Greenpeace have attempted to establish hegemony within the field of environmentalism.

Greenpeace was a marginal organisation in the 1970s, and its views were on the fringes of the mainstream at that time. In contrast, *Our Common Future* represents the views of a political formation that could not contradict the mainstream view of environmental issues, as any opposition to the content from the US or USSR would have easily halted the work of the commission.³⁴ I thus frame the comparison between Greenpeace and the UN as a struggle to establish hegemony between essentially different political actors within the political field of environmentalism. This framing reveals similarities and differences of disparate attempts to articulate an environmental political project. Both Greenpeace and UN vied for hegemony and the power to define the debate over the emerging field of environmentalism.

Furthermore, while their processes of establishing the Noble Savage differed, I demonstrate that the function of the figure was similar in each case. The fact that the figure

³³ Argyrou 52.

³⁴ Borowy, Iris. *Defining Sustainable Development for Our Common Future: a History of the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission)*. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014. 57. 17.

lends itself to various adaptations, as evident from its history in Western literature, underlines its ‘fluidity’, which also contributes to its function in the texts. As far as I know, there is no explicit connection between early Greenpeace and the use of the noble savage in *Our Common Future*. Rather, the aim of the paper is to highlight the fluid or ‘floating’ character of the Noble Savage. Examining a single case of the employment of the concept in an environmental context would not adequately highlight this floating character. By examining two cases, this paper differentiates the concept as it is used in contexts of environmentalism. This difference within the Noble Savage also partially explains its function within the texts when subsumed under the idea of ‘hegemonic articulation’, which Laclau and Mouffe have argued is a central feature of modern politics in which the ‘Ecologically Noble Savage’ emerges. I further explain the theoretical framework of Laclau and Mouffe’s ‘hegemonic articulation’ in the Method and Theory section.

1.3 *Our Common Future*

The WCED, or Brundtland Commission, published *Our Common Future* in 1987.

In 1983, the UN General Assembly Resolution 38/161 established the Brundtland Commission with the following mandate:

8. Suggests that the Special Commission, when established, should focus mainly on the following terms of reference for its work:
 - (a) To propose long-term environmental strategies for achieving sustainable development to the year 2000 and beyond;
 - (b) To recommend ways in which concern for the environment may be translated into greater co-operation among developing countries and between countries at different stages of economic and social development and lead to the achievement of common and mutually supportive objectives which take account of the interrelationships between people, resources, environment and development;
 - (c) To consider ways and means by which the international community can deal more effectively with environmental concerns, in the light of the other recommendations in its report;
 - (d) To help to define shared perceptions of long-term environmental issues and of the appropriate efforts needed to deal successfully with the problems of protecting and enhancing the environment, a long-term agenda for action during the coming decades, and aspirational goals for the world community, taking into account the relevant resolutions of the session of a special character of the Governing Council in 1982;³⁵

³⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. “Process of preparation of the Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond”, *Resolution 38/161*. Web.

Our Common Future was the main product of this commission³⁶ and became highly influential, mostly through the concept of ‘sustainable development’, which has become commonplace in a variety of environmental discourses. In 2015, several UN countries adopted a set of sustainable development goals that cover a wide range of policy areas. The document was a culmination of a series of public hearings in numerous locations around the world. In these public hearings, the commission received testimonies from a broad variety of representatives from governments, NGOs, research institutes, industries, businesses and the general public as well as experts and scientists.

The book includes a chapter titled “Empowering Vulnerable Groups” which devotes to the subject of indigenous peoples and their relation to the policy considerations in question.³⁷ Although this section only covers a few pages, the content of this section implicitly reproduces the figure of Noble Savage and establishes novel relations between this figure and the conceptual framework of the book.

The book includes several of these testimonies in the form of ‘text boxes’ that occasionally interrupt the main text. These are reminiscent of text boxes in high school text books, which provide examples and concrete instances of the topics that the main text addresses. I discuss the function of these text boxes later in my analysis.

Various groups and individuals also provided written submissions that were synthesised into the report. The list of acknowledgments in the book is long and extensive, which attests to the large number of individuals who were involved in the work. Because of the nature of the organisation and its work, the production of most UN documents involves numerous parties. All member states must agree on the publication of documents through the various bodies, which leads to complicated negotiations over the smallest details in texts. Thus, UN documents belong to a distinct genre with multiple idiosyncratic features.

1.4 Greenpeace

Greenpeace was founded in 1971 by a heterogeneous group of people who were opposed to nuclear testing off the coast of Canada. There was no founding manifesto or philosophy, and the founding members differed significantly in their ideas about the

³⁶ The members of the commission came from diverse backgrounds: 23 members from 22 countries, six Europeans, three from North America, four each from South America and Asia, and six were from African and/or Arab countries.³⁶ 9 had PhDs and but most were politicians. Borowy 57.

³⁷ WCED 114-116.

movement. The organisation has evolved throughout the years, with several of the early founding members leaving the organisation because of internal conflicts over its methods of protest and its structure and organisation. For these reasons, there is no text that fully embodies the ideology behind the movement. Nevertheless, since the 1970s, the organisation and its founding members have published several books and shorter texts that elaborate on the motivations and ideas that underlie their actions and campaigns. This thesis focuses on the publications by Robert Hunter (1941-2005), a central figure in the early years of the movement. Hunter introduced to the movement a set of ideas that synthesise ecological theory, Native American imagery and other reflections on spirituality and religion. In addition to his work with environmentalism, he was a journalist and writer. He published several books on multiple topics besides environmentalism and was engaged in both local Canadian and international politics through his writing.³⁸

This thesis focuses on the book *Warriors of The Rainbow: A Chronicle of the Greenpeace Movement* from 1971 to 1979 (second edition 2011). The book is an account of the early years of Greenpeace from Hunter's perspective. In addition, the prophecy from Hunter entitled 'Return of the Spirit' that was mentioned at the beginning of this thesis arises frequently as a motif. I also rely implicitly on two other books by Hunter, namely *Red Blood* (1999) and *The Storming of the Mind* (1971), for background and context of his thoughts and ideas.

The analysis also considers the myth or prophecy which Hunter obtained from *Warriors of the Rainbow: Strange and Prophetic Indian Dreams* (1962) by William Willoya and Vinson Brown, a collection of Native American myths and prophecies. The story is sometimes referred to as a legend, myth and prophecy interchangeably. For this thesis, the genre labels are not important, however, and I refer to the story interchangeably as a legend, myth or prophecy interchangeably. Hunter borrowed the phrase 'Warriors of the Rainbow' from this myth, which the literature and imagery of the Greenpeace organisation heavily employed. The book is primarily a collection of Native American myths, but it also contains references to Hindu and Buddhist myths. It interprets all of these myths within a Christian framework and understands them as variations on the theme of prophetic visions of the coming of a messiah. A complete analysis of this book is outside the scope of the thesis, which is limited to 'Return of the Spirit' and Hunter's use of this myth.

³⁸ "Bob Hunter." *Greenpeace USA*, 2005. Web.

I trace the incorporation of Hunter's reflections in these texts into official Greenpeace literature. Both periodicals and other texts by Greenpeace have explicitly utilised Hunter's ideas, which have also become embedded in visual imagery and the naming of ships that are used for protest actions. I cite two examples here: a publication entitled *The Greenpeace Story* (second edition, 1991), which is a self-celebratory book intended for people within or with an affinity towards Greenpeace, and *Greenpeace Chronicles* (2011), a similar kind of document that was, published primarily for Greenpeace members.

1.5 Research Questions and Thesis Statement

This thesis attempts to address three main questions.

1. How do Greenpeace and *Our Common Future* textually construct the Ecologically Noble Savage as an element of their hegemonic articulations of environmentalism?
2. What are the role and function of the Ecologically Noble Savage in these hegemonic articulations?
3. How does this element rely on older articulations of the noble savage in European thought and culture?

In answering these questions, I aim to expand upon Argyrou's analysis by illustrating the articulatory and hegemonic aspects of the texts in relation to the Ecologically Noble Savage. My analysis also clarifies how Greenpeace and *Our Common Future* have rearticulated the noble savage of older European thought and culture within modern discourse on environmentalism.

2. Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives

In their seminal work *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985), Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe have provided a political theory for modern politics. In particular, they have attempted to account for the rise of so-called ‘new social movements’ which had been rapidly rising to prominence at the time they published the work. Second-wave feminism, the peace movement, the sexual liberation movement, the anti-racist movement, and ecology or environmentalism were prominent representatives of this wave of new social movements. According to Laclau and Mouffe, these movements have a common hegemonic form of politics.³⁹ Their use of the term ‘hegemony’ is atypical and has a narrower technical meaning. In this section, I develop this concept and those relating to it, which together comprise Laclau and Mouffe’s political theory of modern politics.

This paper then analyses the introduction of the Noble Savage into environmentalism by Greenpeace and the UN as a particular case of hegemonic politics. Laclau and Mouffe’s theory has already presented environmentalism as a new political phenomenon, and this thesis seeks to further understand the self-articulation of this kind of politics. Specifically, it investigates how the Noble Savage, as a textual device, has helped produce an ‘articulation’ which assumes the hegemonic form.

According to Laclau and Mouffe, a hegemonic form dominates modern politics. Hegemony in this sense does not refer to a place or an actor within a political formation. It is common to use the word ‘hegemony’ to discuss ‘the political hegemony of the US’ or ‘the US is the hegemon of international politics’. Moreover, hegemony is associated with power and dominance and describes a state in which one or several actors – or even ideas – maintain a dominant position in terms of power. Laclau and Mouffe’s hegemony, however, describes either a ‘type relation’ or a ‘form’ of politics. Still, this does not mean that the power and dominance of actors in certain positions are not present in contexts where a hegemonic form of politics is operational; rather, ‘hegemony’ refers to a specific way in which actors seek to establish or assume a position of dominance or power.

They achieve this manifestation of the hegemonic form or relation through articulation – another key term in Laclau and Mouffe’s theory. Articulation is associated with language and describes the act of producing the utterance of a statement in the common sense of the word. Within the framework of Laclau and Mouffe’s theory, articulation describes a process by which a discourse attempts to fix the meaning of so-called ‘elements’ (cf. below). Here,

³⁹ Laclau, Mouffe 159-160.

‘discourse’ includes not only words, sentences and texts in general but also any aspects which words or gestures can name or nominate. Thus, discourse contains both material objects and abstract concepts.⁴⁰ Laclau and Mouffe borrows Michel Foucault’s definition of ‘discourse’ with some modifications.⁴¹ Discourses are thus formed out of a ‘discursive formation’ unified by a ‘regularity in dispersion’. In contrast to Foucault however, they reject the existence of ‘non-discursive practices’, roughly meaning that everything is discourse. There is not enough space to exhaustively define the concept here; however, for this thesis, it suffices to consider the Greenpeace texts and *Our Common Future* as examples of two (competing) discourses which attempt to fix meaning within the field of environmentalism.⁴²

This kind of articulation extends beyond linguistic phenomena to encompass the ‘social’ and ‘society’:

Every social practice is therefore – in one of its dimensions – articulatory. As it is not the internal moment of a self-defined totality, it cannot simply be the expression of something already acquired, it cannot be wholly subsumed under the principle of repetition; rather, it always consists in the construction of new differences. The social *is* articulation insofar as ‘society’ is impossible.⁴³

In other words, the social itself is articulation. All actions of actors in society are articulations. A central feature of modernity, as understood by Laclau and Mouffe, is the unfixed meaning of all actions, words, images, etc., and the process of articulation involves fixing the meaning of these ‘elements’:

The practice of articulation, therefore, consists in the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning; and the partial character of this fixation proceeds from the openness of the social, a result, in its turn, of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity.⁴⁴

Elements are the basic unit of the discourse, which emerges from a ‘differential network’ of elements. For example, in this thesis the Noble Savage is a central element of the two discourses in question. This thesis demonstrates that the meaning of this element is inherently unstable, thereby situating it as a ‘floating element’. Other key elements in both

⁴⁰ This does not mean that objects do not exist if they are not part of a discourse. Instead, the second an object is designated by a word or a gesture, it becomes part of discourse. This is not to say whatever is designated did not exist prior to being introduced into discourse.

⁴¹ Laclau, Mouffe 105.

⁴² Cf. Michel Foucault *Archeology of Knowledge* (1968).

⁴³ Laclau, Mouffe 113-114.

⁴⁴ Laclau, Mouffe 113.

cases are the environment, Earth and nature. Slight variations in meaning between these elements, which result from the various ways in which they are ‘fixed’ by the discourse, serve to construct and highlight oppositions between certain elements while dissolving and erasing oppositions between others.

According to Laclau and Mouffe, another central feature of modernity is the fundamental instability of the meaning of any element.⁴⁵ This instability does not entail that there is an infinite number of equally valid interpretations of a given phenomenon. Rather, all elements exist somewhere between complete ‘non-fixity’ and ‘fixity’, which enables a series of potential interpretations that are partially constrained. An articulation attempts to reduce the number of possible interpretations by partially fixing elements, which then become ‘moments’.⁴⁶ Privileged elements become ‘nodal points’ around which other ‘moments’ structure themselves in a differential network.⁴⁷

As noted earlier, Laclau and Mouffe have also claim that a ‘hegemonic’ form has come to define modern politics. This implies an expansion of antagonisms to new areas of society which in turn prompted new social movements in the 20th century. Environmentalism, or the ecological movement, is one kind of such movements which had a novel role ‘in articulating that rapid diffusion of social conflictuality to more and more numerous relations which is characteristic today of advanced industrial societies’.⁴⁸ The ‘hegemonic articulation with other struggles and demands’ is a central feature of these movements and defines their political meaning, which is ‘not given from the beginning’ and can only be understood through hegemonic articulation.

According to Laclau and Mouffe, ‘[h]egemony is, quite simply, a political type of relation, a form, if one so wishes, of politics; but not a determinable location within a topography of the social’.⁴⁹ Furthermore, this form or relation has emerged as dominant within modernity:

This is why the hegemonic form of politics only becomes dominant at the beginning of modern times, when the reproduction of the different social areas takes places in permanently changing conditions which constantly require the construction of new systems of differences. Hence the area of articulatory practices is immensely broadened. Thus the conditions and the possibility of a pure fixing of differences recede; every social identity becomes the meeting point for a multiplicity of

⁴⁵ Laclau, Mouffe 111.

⁴⁶ Laclau, Mouffe 113.

⁴⁷ Laclau, Mouffe 112.

⁴⁸ Laclau, Mouffe 159-160.

⁴⁹ Laclau, Mouffe 139.

articulatory practices, many of them antagonistic. In these circumstances, it is not possible to arrive at a complete interiorization that totally bridges the gap between articulated and articulator. But, it is important to emphasize, neither is it possible for the identity of the articulating force to remain separate and unchanged.⁵⁰

Hegemonic politics is thus a name for a practice of articulation with the aim of establishing the identity of certain elements in opposition or antagonism to others. This takes place in a situation in which there is no fundamental identity behind any element. Political subjects can assume various potential identities, including woman, proletarian, proponent of ecology and anti-racist.

Articulations which establish equivalence between these unstable elements, and thereby partially fix the identity, take the form of hegemonic politics. This form relies on the establishment of meaning through metonymy:

In this sense, we could say that hegemony is basically metonymical: its effects always emerge from a surplus of meaning which results from an operation of displacement. (For example, a trade union or a religious organization may take on organizational functions in a community, which go beyond the traditional practices ascribed to them, and which are combated and resisted by opposing forces.)⁵¹

Hegemonic politics therefore requires the expansion of a political project into areas that were previously outside of its original scope. Articulations, which manage to accomplish this, derive certain authority and legitimacy from a credible enlargement of the original scope of practices that a political movement or project undertakes. The ability to displace the perceived 'essence'⁵² of a political institution into new domains grants the hegemonic articulation a semblance of 'universality'. However, this is not to say that every hegemonic articulation is successful. There is competition among various institutions and agents to provide a hegemonic articulation that most successfully integrates and overlaps seemingly disparate elements into a 'chain of equivalence', thus granting the political institution the appearance of possessing the most universality of all.

Hegemony emerges from a totality of the process of fixing elements into 'chains of equivalence'. Each articulation attempts to construct a centre around which all elements are oriented. It achieves this by establishing a chain of equivalence between elements, which then

⁵⁰ Laclau, Mouffe 139.

⁵¹ Laclau, Mouffe 141.

⁵² This essence is socially constructed, but, in the typical cases examined by Laclau and Mouffe, does not appear as such for whomever the political message is intended.

stand in a metonymical relation or as displacements of each other. Laclau and Mouffe have cited the situation of a ‘coloniser’ and a ‘colonised’ as an example of this dynamic.⁵³ The identity of the colonised emerges only in opposition to the coloniser.

The colonised establish a chain of equivalence between elements such as their manner of dress and speech and the kinds of food they eat. These elements all become equivalent in the colonised-coloniser scenario only insofar as they stand in opposition to another chain of equivalence. The opposing chain is simply the mirror image of the way in which the coloniser dresses and speaks and the kinds of food they. Thus, two chains of equivalence are differentially opposed to each other. Together, but only through their mutual differential opposition, they impart identity to both the coloniser and the colonised.

The reliance on a chain of equivalence in the formulation of identity is key to the function of the noble savage element in the investigated texts. *Our Common Future* establishes the identity of ‘indigenous or traditional’ people through an equivalence of various disparate elements. This chain of equivalence is then linked with the environmental project as established by the book. Similarly, Greenpeace’s idea of an environmental movement and struggle is made equivalent with the struggle of Native Americans.

Laclau and Mouffe’s framework builds on post-structural understandings of language and texts. The lack of a ‘final suture’ of society and the fundamental openness of the social, which underlies the inherent instability of all ‘elements’, renders it impossible to provide any final ‘truth’ about environmentalism. Nevertheless, both Greenpeace and *Our Common Future* attempt an articulation that presents matters as if they possess a ‘final suture’. Therefore, a portion of my analysis focuses on illustrating the non-essential character of the various elements within in each discourse, as this demonstrates how both Greenpeace and the UN have attempted to impose a ‘final suture’ that erases the fundamental ambiguity of the elements. To this end, I perform a sort of ‘deconstructive’ ‘close reading’ of the texts.⁵⁴ This approach involves explaining how binary oppositions within the texts are not essential but are instead socially constructed and reliant on exceptions to the seemingly ‘objective’ oppositions.

The thesis also relies to a lesser extent on a few other theoretical concepts. The analysis of *Our Common Future* investigates the ‘intertextual’ aspects of the texts, as defined

⁵³ Laclau, Mouffe 128.

⁵⁴ Cf. Derrida: Laclau and Mouffe influenced by Derrida, see Laclau, Mouffe 111-112.

by Julia Kristeva.⁵⁵ I also look at the ‘paratexts’ of *Our Common Future*, here understood as ‘the means by which a text makes a book of itself proposes itself as such to its readers, and more generally to the public.’⁵⁶ Finally, Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs perspectives on the ‘purifying’ processes behind the traditional versus modern dichotomy⁵⁷ and the process of ‘interperformance’ (which I define more specifically in the analysis) within a text also informs the analysis of both texts.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Kristeva, Julia. “From Revolution in Poetic Language.” *Northon Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Leitch, Vincent, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2071-2081.

⁵⁶ Genette, Gérard, Marie Maclean. “Introduction to Paratext.” *New Literary History*, Vol. 22, No. 2, Probing: Art, Criticism, Genre (Spring, 1991), pp. 261-272. 261.

⁵⁷ Bauman, Richards and Charles L. Briggs. *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality (Studies in the Social and Cultural Foundations of Language)*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

⁵⁸ Bauman, Richard. *A World of Other Words. Cross-cultural Perspectives on Intertextuality*. Oxford, UK: Wiley, 2004.

3. *Our Common Future's* Articulation of the Ecologically Noble Savage

In 1989, the Centre for *Our Common Future*, which the UN created in order to promote the book and its message, aired a five-hour-long media event to television stations in over 100 countries.⁵⁹ Hal Uplinger and Tony Verna, the producers behind the 1984 Live Aid concert, produced the show. It followed the same structure as the Live Aid concert, with music performances by artists such as Sting, Lenny Kravitz and the Moscow Symphony interlaced with short video clips of environmental work in progress across the globe and speeches by important political leaders, including George Bush, Margaret Thatcher and Robert Mugabe.⁶⁰ The show encouraged viewers to contact local environmental groups in their respective countries to learn how they could contribute, and it apparently managed to spread awareness of *Our Common Future* and its message. The centre received thousands of letters asking for more information.⁶¹ The breadth of cultural, political and institutional affiliation that the show represented testifies to the attempt by the Brundtland Commission to disseminate their message to the widest possible audience.

I am partly concerned with how the book managed to achieve this broad appeal as well as with illustrating how the Ecologically Noble Savage played into this achievement. From the perspective of Laclau and Mouffe's political theory, only the expansion of a political movement beyond its 'original' scope can accomplish hegemony. This chapter indicates how the treatment of 'indigenous and tribal people' in *Our Common Future* expands its political project beyond a narrower idea of environmental politics. I first present the background and structure of the book before conducting a close reading of the relevant parts of the book and analysing the text in terms of Laclau and Mouffe's political theory. The close reading is a partly 'deconstructive' reading that aims to clarify how the non-essential or contingent nature of assumed binary oppositions is implicit in the text. A deconstruction of these structures within the text reflects how the discourse fixes elements and how *Our Common Future* establishes a hegemonic formulation.

3.1 *Our Common Future* as a Text

Our Common Future was published as a book, which is a common format for UN publications. The UN has published over a hundred books on the subject of environmentalism

⁵⁹ Borowy 179.

⁶⁰ Borowy 180.

⁶¹ Borowy 180.

alone.⁶² Like most books, *Our Common Future* features a series of paratextual elements.⁶³ These include a cover, a blurb on the back cover, and a section at the beginning of the book with publication details, a content overview and a foreword. Furthermore, it contains a list of the members of the commission, with the nationality of each member in parentheses after his or her name. The blurb on the back cover presents a dramatic hook to potential readers:

Most of today's decision makers will be dead before the planet suffers the full consequences of acid rain, global warming, ozone depletion, widespread desertification, and species loss. Most of today's young voters will be alive. [...] *Our Common Future* serves notice that time has come for a marriage of economy and ecology, so that governments and their people can take responsibility not just for environmental damage, but for the policies that cause the damage. Some of these policies threaten the survival of the human race. They can be changed. But we must act now. [In bold red letters:] This is the most important document of the decade on the future of the world.

In combination with the minimalistic front cover, which simply depicts the title in large, bold letters and the title of the UN commission underneath, the blurb immediately alerts the reader that this is a serious book on an urgent topic.

The book begins with a foreword that is entitled 'Chairman's Foreword' and signed 'Gro Harlem Brundtland, Oslo 20 March 1987'. The foreword includes the mandate cited above, which functions to legitimate the authority of the text within the text. The inclusion of 'Oslo' in the signature further contributes as an authorising device. One could imagine the place being Washington, D.C. or London, which are both more notable centres of power than Oslo, but this would not fit with the ethos of globalism. Oslo is both a part of the centre, by virtue of its status as the capital of a Western country, and a periphery. Brundtland had also served as the minister of environment and the prime minister of a left-wing government in Norway before the publication and would hold a chairmanship at the Socialist International a few years later. Within the context of the Cold War, the personal signature and placement at the end of the foreword served to mediate the opposing power blocs at the time and thus speak from a more 'universal' position. The Chairman's Foreword thus establishes a position of enunciation between various oppositions within the international community that could have been problematic in terms of achieving a broad appeal for the book.

⁶² <https://shop.un.org/taxonomy/term/702>

⁶³ Genette, Gérard 261.

3.2 The Intertextual Struggle for Hegemony

A critical concern for the Brundtland Commission was the dissolution of tension between development and sustainability. *Our Common Future* had to prove that development and sustainability are compatible in order to generate the broadest possible consensus. The 1972 publication *Limits to Growth* by the organisation Club of Rome had posed fundamental questions about the limits of growth.⁶⁴ The publication presented the results of a series of computer simulations that attempted to estimate when Earth will run out of essential resources. According to the publication, ‘the limits to growth on this planet will be reached sometime within the next one hundred years’.⁶⁵ Experts within various related fields criticised the models that informed these conclusions as employing a recycled version of ‘Malthusian thinking’.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the *Limits to Growth* sold 30 million copies in 30 languages, making it one of the most widely read books on environmentalism.⁶⁷

Several of the commissioners who represented poorer southern countries, who were well aware of *Limits to Growth* and the fundamental problem it poses, worried that such limits to growth would preclude poor nations from ever enjoying the same kind of wealth as northern nations.⁶⁸ In view of this worry, the commissioners agreed that *Our Common Future* had to avoid any association with *Limits to Growth*.⁶⁹ Part of the achievement of *Our Common Future* was its ability to downplay this threat and reassure representatives of poorer countries that this would not be the case while simultaneously assuring wealthier nations that they would not have to reduce their living standards to achieve sustainability. The Ecologically Noble Savage has a role in achieving this functioning as a ‘floating element’ that does not fit on either side of the developing-developed or poor-rich dichotomies. In this section, I demonstrate and analyse this role through a deconstructive reading that begins with the text’s treatment of the supposed division between ‘the environment’ and human activity.

These tensions persisted after the publication of the book, with notable parts of the environmental movement, such as environmentalists in Norway or the Green Party in West Germany, declaring opposition.⁷⁰ *Our Common Future* thus attempted to find a place within this intertext of opposing strains of environmentalism. This place had to address pressures

⁶⁴ Meadows, Donella H, et al. *Limits to Growth*. New York: Universe Books, 1972.

⁶⁵ Meadows 23.

⁶⁶ Thomas Malthus was a 18th and 19th century English scholar who predicted mass famine because the food supply would not be able to keep up with population growth.⁶⁶ His theory proved false (thus far) as society discovered new methods of food production.

⁶⁷ Simmons, Matthew. “Revisiting The Limits to Growth.” Mud City Press, 2000, web. 1.

⁶⁸ Borowy 126.

⁶⁹ Borowy foreword.

⁷⁰ Borowy 177.

from both the more radical strains of environmentalism and reassure those more sceptical of drastic measures to deal with the problems at hand.

The foreword establishes a basic premise for ‘the environment’ and ‘our’ relation to it:

When the terms of reference of our Commission were originally being discussed in 1982, there were those who wanted its considerations to be limited to ‘environmental issues’ only. This would have been a grave mistake. The environment does not exist as a sphere separate from human actions, ambitions, and needs, and attempts to defend it in isolation from human concerns have given the very word ‘environment’ a connotation of naivety in some political circles. The word ‘development’ has also been narrowed by some into a very limited focus, along the lines of ‘what poor nations should do to become richer’, and thus again is automatically dismissed by many in the international arena as being a concern of specialists, of those involved in questions of ‘development assistance’. But the ‘environment’ is where we all live; and ‘development’ is what we all do in attempting to improve our lot within that abode. The two are inseparable.⁷¹

First, the text distances itself from ‘those who wanted its considerations to be limited to “environmental issues” only’. In this case, ‘those’ could refer to various representatives of institutions who had a vested interest in maintaining stable growth and considered any environmental policy that hampered this interest to be unrealistic.⁷² Those who limited ‘development’ equally wanted to divorce environmental concerns from the issue of enriching poor nations, perhaps out of worry that it would constrain the ability of poor countries to achieve living standards on par with those of rich nations. The problem that *Limits to Growth* poses thus lurks in the background, but this fear is promptly dismissed as a mere result of errors in our conceptions of the ‘environment’ and ‘development’.

The foreword claims to correct two supposed errors in these conceptions by those who disagree that the two are inseparable. The first mistake lies in the separation of the sphere of ‘environment’ from ‘human actions, ambitions and needs’. This leads to the futile project of defending the environment ‘in isolation from human concerns’. The second mistake is the idea that ‘development’ and ‘environment’ are separate. The former is not simply a technical political term but in fact a fundamental process of society that ‘we all do’. This has a double meaning: on the one hand, it reaffirms a progressive view of history in which there are no static equilibriums but a constant expansion of our activities and concerns; On the other hand, in the words of Argyrou, nature is no longer an ‘intractable domain of utility and danger’ ‘to be mastered, tamed, brought under “man’s” control, bent to his will, forced to reveal her

⁷¹ WCED xi.

⁷² Borowy 177.

secrets, compelled to satisfy his needs and minister to his happiness'. Instead, we have moved from the modern paradigm to what I called the sacred Earth paradigm in the introduction, where nature has become the environment. The opening paragraph of the first chapter provides a clue as to how we achieved this shift in the conception of nature and culture:

In the middle of the 20th century, we saw our planet from space for the first time. Historians may eventually find that this vision had a greater impact on thought than did the Copernican revolution of the 16th century, which upset the human self-image by revealing that the Earth is not the center of the universe. From space, we see a small and fragile ball dominated not by human activity and edifice but by a pattern of clouds, oceans, greenery, and soils. Humanity's inability to fit its doings into that pattern is changing planetary systems, fundamentally. Many such changes are accompanied by life-threatening hazards. This new reality, from which there is no escape, must be recognized-and managed.⁷³

A 'revelation' is implicit in the shift from an embedded perspective to a birds-eye perspective. Analogous to the claim that the Copernican revolution caused a radical de-centring humanity on a cosmological scale, the invisibility of 'human activity and edifice' on Earth, when viewed from space, re-orientes the relative positions of human and nature. 'We' realise 'our' inseparability from nature through our apparent invisibility given that we observe ourselves from the appropriate distance. *Our Common Future* grounds its political outlook in this 'revelation' and emphasises the importance of maintaining this global perspective in order to avoid the mistake of failing to view oneself as a part of the whole. *Our Common Future* positions itself on the correct side of this shift by acknowledging this revelation.

Although this revelation is a realisation of the precarious situation in which society finds itself, this 'new reality coincides with more positive developments as well:

We can move information and goods faster around the globe than ever before; we can produce more food and more goods with less investment and resources; our technology and science gives us at least the potential to look deeper into and better understand natural systems. From space, we can see and study the Earth as an organism whose health depends on the health of all its parts.⁷⁴

Through the promise of technology and science, *Our Common Future* quickly dispels the sense of doom and gloom that is implicit in the revelation. There is an ambiguity inherent to the metaphorical position in space from which we see the Earth as a 'fragile ball'. While it causes a decentering along the lines of a Copernican Revolution, this is a position from which

⁷³ WCED 1.

⁷⁴ WCED 1.

we can face ‘the new reality’ by treating the Earth depending on its parts. Humanity’s realisation of its ‘inability to fit its doings’ becomes both a loss and a renewal of confidence. This attempt to balance negative and positive outlooks may stem from the underlying problem that is reflected in the worries of the commissioners about the conclusions of publications such as *Limits to Growth*.

Our Common Future immediately addresses this worry in its introduction through this ‘dialectical’ manoeuvre of transforming the realisation of our failure into a potential opening for success. This manoeuvre also establishes a ‘chain of equivalence’ as Laclau and Mouffe have defined in the previous chapter. At its most basic level, this chain is first posited through the ‘marriage of economy and ecology’, which is simultaneously the marriage of the environment and development as well as of the individual parts and whole of Earth. The phrase ‘sustainable development’ promises a future in which the pairs of ‘economy and ecology’ and ‘environment and development’ are no longer in opposition but are instead seamlessly integrated into each other. To make such an outcome a credible possibility, *Our Common Future* expends considerable effort in demonstrating how ecological problems cannot be solved without solving economic problems, and vice versa. The balancing act of providing honest diagnoses of environmental problems while attempting to deliver solutions creates another problem, however. Once we have imagined ourselves as an abstract subject that is removed from our particular circumstances and viewing Earth as a fragile ball from space, the question becomes how we are supposed to return to our particular circumstance as a part of the whole. The challenge is to maintain a ‘global’ point of view while still being a specific individual in the world. This is where the Ecologically Noble Savage enters and extends the chain of equivalence between economy and ecology.

3.3 The Vulnerable Ecologically Noble Savage and Their Vast Repository of Knowledge

Our Common Future addresses the status of ‘tribal and indigenous peoples’ within the framework of development as a distinct topic. There is no stable term for this grouping in the text, and the report employs the distancing ‘so-called’ when addressing them as ‘tribal and indigenous’.⁷⁵ In fact, the report uses the phrase ‘tribal and indigenous’ only twice in total, and the remaining sentences simply refer back to these references as ‘these’ groups or people. After naming several characteristics of these groups, the text refers to them by reference to

⁷⁵ WCED 114.

‘these isolated vulnerable groups’.⁷⁶ The report also contains a couple of uses of the term ‘traditional people’.

The identity of this group within the text remains highly ambiguous, which renders the whole discussion of the topic vague and abstract. Because of this and the characteristics attributed to this group, it seems difficult to not establish associations with the traditional employment of the term Noble Savage in Western anthropological and cultural history. The lack of any references to further literature on this topic in the notes or to material to substantiate the claims further underscores the vagueness and abstraction. References to experts, literature and other sources of information much more thoroughly substantiate other topics in the book.

Nonetheless, a specific reference to a particular individual appears to absolve this ambiguity. This reference assumes the form of a text box, as discussed earlier, in the middle of the section ‘Empowering Vulnerable Groups’. This text box presents a testimony that Ailton Krenak, the co-ordinator of Indian Nations’ Union, provided in Sao Paulo between October 28 and 29, 1985. In a sense, this text box is an intertext within the text and served as a ‘counter-signature’ authorizing the message of *Our Common Future*. I address this testimony after my discussion of the main text.

Our Common Future attempts to fill the category of ‘traditional or tribal peoples’ by identifying the following points of distinction between them and the rest of society: (1) their intimate relationship with nature due to particular lifestyles (as opposed to the less intimate relationship with nature of characteristic of modern society), (2) the need for special attention to this group in policy frameworks, (3) the inherent conflict between their lifestyles and ‘the forces of economic development’ and (4) their close proximity to nature itself (as opposed to the relative distance from nature of the rest of society). I proceed through each of these points in order.

1. ‘Closeness to nature’: First, the report affirms the special relationship between culture and nature that is often attributed to ‘tribal and indigenous peoples’ as well as modern society’s lack of such a special relationship.⁷⁷ Their ‘life-styles...can offer modern societies many lessons in the management of resources in complex forest, mountain, and dryland ecosystems’ and ‘could learn a great deal from their traditional skills in sustainably managing very complex ecological systems’. These lifestyles are valuable for their ‘close harmony with

⁷⁶ WCED 116.

⁷⁷ WCED 12.

the natural environment',⁷⁸ which is a result of the dependence of 'their survival...on their ecological awareness and adaption'. If their survival has relied on a close relationship with nature, then modern society has survived despite its relationship to nature. Interestingly, while modern society can learn many lessons from this distinction to achieve 'sustainable development', no lessons travel the other way. Modern society's hubristic mastery of nature has little to no value for indigenous or tribal peoples. Furthermore, modern society learn not only resource management but also deep knowledge of itself: 'these communities are the repositories of vast accumulations of traditional knowledge and experience that links humanity with its ancient origins'.⁷⁹ These peoples are thus valuable both spiritually and materially for modern society, implying a certain lack in these by the latter.

2. Need for special attention: Second, UN and governmental policy must treat this group separately from everyone else. According to the report, these peoples require 'special attention as the forces of economic development disrupt their traditional life-styles'.⁸⁰ Their close proximity to nature makes them particularly vulnerable to the 'insensitive development over which they have no control'. For this reason, *Our Common Future* considers this group separately from other groups that it discusses. The report generally divides the world into 'industrialised', 'more developed' or simply 'rich' countries on the one hand and 'developing countries' or 'countries with majority of poor people' on the other.⁸¹ Implicit in this division is a teleological idea that the 'developing' will one day become 'developed'. Tribal and indigenous peoples fall outside of this division and teleology, which prompts the report to devote a separate section to the special attention that this group warrants.⁸² The report almost refrains from deploying the word 'development' at all in the discussion of this group. Instead, it highlights the need to recognise 'their traditional rights' and give them 'a decisive voice in formulating policies'. Because of their exclusion from the developmental logic, UN and governmental policy should aim to enact 'the legal and institutional changes that accompany organized development' that is compatible with their 'traditional ways of life'.

3. Conflict between lifestyles and development: Third, the emphasis on 'traditional ways of life' in the discussion of indigenous people also affirms a distinction between them and everyone else. 'Forces of economic development' threaten their way of life to a greater extent. According to *Our Common Future*, 'the processes of development generally lead to

⁷⁸ WCED 114.

⁷⁹ WCED 114.

⁸⁰ WCED 12.

⁸¹ WCED 4-5.

⁸² WCED 114.

the gradual integration of local communities into larger social and economic framework'.⁸³ Indigenous or tribal peoples, however, 'remain isolated because of such factors as physical barriers to communication, or marked differences in social and cultural practices'. This isolation 'has also meant that few of them have shared in the national economic and social development; this may be reflected in their poor health, nutrition, and education'. They not only suffer materially but also 'become victims of what could be described as cultural extinction'.⁸⁴

As Bauman and Briggs have indicated, the terms 'modern' and 'traditional' rely on a 'purification' of a set of oppositions that is thought to be constitutive of the divide between the two.⁸⁵ *Our Common Future's* sharp differentiation of the modern and traditional follows this logic by erasing 'impurities' on both sides. The many indigenous peoples who have integrated into urban communities are not the individuals that *Our Common Future* has in mind in its descriptions of their culture and emphasis on 'protection of their traditional rights'.

4. Proximity to nature: Fourth, *Our Common Future* construes the intimate relationship between indigenous or tribal peoples and nature as a result of not only ecological awareness and adaptation but also proximity: 'such groups are found in North America, in Australia, in the Amazon basin, in Central America, in the forests and hills of Asia, in the deserts of North Africa, and elsewhere'.⁸⁶ This group is universal to all regions of the world and found in the various geographical locations that exemplify each region (e.g. deserts in North Africa, forests and hills in Asia, Amazon basin in South America). Furthermore, '[m]any live in areas rich in valuable natural resources'. Cities and urban environments stand in implied contrast to these images of nature. The further one moves from cities into the periphery, the greater the likelihood of finding indigenous peoples living in treacherous, inhospitable environments, such a desert or frozen tundra, or in environments that are rich in natural resources. Other parts of the book, such as dreary descriptions of slums, illustrate the degradation that has accompanied insensitive development in urbanised areas. These stand in sharp contrast to the rich and multifarious environments that it describes in connection with indigenous peoples.

The status of 'these isolated, vulnerable groups' in the report is thus double and ambiguous. Indigenous and tribal people can teach us to resolve the central problems with

⁸³ WCED 114.

⁸⁴ WCED 114.

⁸⁵ Bauman, Richards and Charles Briggs. *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality*, 11.

⁸⁶ WCED 114.

which *Our Common Future* contends, but they are simultaneously the ultimate victims of our ‘insensitive development’. Their fragility, which stems from a sensitive and careful relationship with nature and relative isolation from the rest of the world, makes them most vulnerable to environmental degradation but is the quality that provides them with this relationship to nature. One might ask how the insensitive development impacts them the most if they are so isolated. In one sense, they are strongly integrated into the developmental logic, but in another, they are the most isolated of all, and this isolation is both a virtue and vice. The virtue stems from the resulting ‘preservation of a traditional way of life in close harmony with the natural environment’, which may be useful for achieving sustainable development in modern societies. The disadvantage of isolation derives from the vulnerability of this state, as the areas in which they are isolated are ‘rich in valuable natural resources that planners and “developers” want to exploit’.

Insensitive development emerges as a kind of pernicious force (a theme developed throughout the book) which threatens to engulf the entire globe and obliterate all in its path. This force constantly expands its frontiers ‘as development reaches more deeply into rain forests, deserts, and other isolated environments’. The text points out the ‘terrible irony’ in the fact that as formal development expands its frontiers into the isolated domains of indigenous peoples, it destroys these ‘cultures that have proved able to thrive in these environments’.⁸⁷ According to this logic, formal or insensitive development obliterates the final pockets of human settlements that are not caught in this cycle of destructive environmental policy that threatens to engulf the entire globe.

Our Common Future establishes a further relation between ‘traditional people’ and the environment through their mutual threat to their existence. According to the report, ‘their marginalization is a symptom of a style of development that tends to neglect both human and environmental considerations’. As discussed above, our ignorance of the inseparability of human activity from the environment comprises the overarching argument of the book and leads to the ‘style of development’ which threatens the environment. This argument thus links the fate of the environment and indigenous peoples, as both are under threat from this ignorance and its subsequent effects. Therefore, the aforementioned image of frontier expansion is a double expansion of the insensitive and ignorant logic of modern society into the supposedly last remaining domains in which humans and nature still exist in almost Eden-like, homeostatic, perfect equilibrium. The claim that ‘[t]hese communities are the

⁸⁷ WCED 115.

repositories of vast accumulations of traditional knowledge and experience that links humanity with its ancient origins’ also links indigenous people to a common past for all of humanity in its ‘ancient origins’.⁸⁸ This suggests a mythical state from which all humans emerged before a pernicious development of some kind led to a biblical ‘fall’ from a harmonious relationship with nature. The ‘traditional people’ thus become both the evidence of our fall and a possible promise to redeem ourselves from it.

These four points contribute to the expansion of a chain of equivalence that was mentioned at the end of last section. The special relationship between nature and culture that is attributed to indigenous peoples has made them a practical example of treating the environment and our activities as inseparable. They already possess the insight that the image of Earth from space reveals, though perhaps not explicitly. By positioning the marginalisation of ‘these vulnerable groups’ as a symptom of the neglect of both ‘human and environmental consideration’, *Our Common Future* articulates a political project with a hegemonic form. In order to save indigenous peoples and the environment, we need to merge both our human and our environmental considerations. Accordingly, a consideration of ‘their interests is a touchstone of sustainable developmental policy’.⁸⁹ The protection of their interests and the achievement of sustainable development are equivalent – or, in the contrapositive, the ‘cultural extinction’ of indigenous people is equivalent to the extinction of nature. This hegemonic articulation relies on several of the ‘fixations’ of meaning that have been described thus far. Indigenous and tribal peoples can only enter into a chain of equivalence as ‘vulnerable’ and ‘isolated’ groups under the threat of ‘cultural extinction’ in close proximity to nature that simultaneously possess valuable knowledge.

The need for special treatment of those groups identified as indigenous or traditional peoples allows the Ecologically Noble Savage to emerge as a mediator in the rich-poor dichotomy. *Our Common Future* identifies poverty as both a cause and a symptom of environmental degradation:

Poverty itself pollutes the environment, creating environmental stress in a different way. Those who are poor and hungry will often destroy their immediate environment to survive: They will cut down forests; their livestock will overgraze grasslands; they will overuse marginal land; and in growing numbers they will crowd into congested cities.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ WCED 114.

⁸⁹ WCED 116.

⁹⁰ WCED 28.

The book consistently stresses the connection between environmental degradation and poverty, which emphasises impossibility of achieving sustainability without adequate developmental policy. This connection also dissolves concerns over the kinds of conclusions in *Limits to Growth*. According to *Our Common Future*, the only way forward is through an even more intense form of economic growth that aims to eradicate poverty. The fundamental antagonism does not exist between classes or groups of people; instead, the ‘enemy’ is a ‘lack of development’ and ‘the unintended consequences of some forms of economic growth’.⁹¹

This line of argumentation promises not only that poor nations will be able to take part in the kind of wealth that developed nations enjoy but also that this is necessary. As point two has indicated, indigenous and traditional peoples fall outside of the developing-developed logic. Even though ‘few of them have shared in national economic and social development’, their relationship with the environment stands in diametric opposition to that of the poor. Thus, they reassure readers from rich countries by serving as an example of the possibility of achieving sustainability without a massive redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor. Simultaneously, they represent those who have suffered the most from ‘lack of development’ and ‘unintended consequences’, and *Our Common Future*’s special attention to this group promises that all who feel ‘left behind’ will receive appropriate treatment.

3.4 Text Box

The text box that accompanies the section on indigenous peoples further contributes tensions and ambiguities to the text. While the main text operates on a highly abstract level and thus leaves the concept of ‘indigenous or tribal peoples’ hollow for particular content, Aliton Krenak’s ‘testimony’ attempts to fill in this empty container. The text box structure lends itself to this function, as it entails the interruption of the text by an empty space to be filled with content. The date and placement of the testimony (28-29 Oct 1985) affixes the text to a time and place that is outside of the text. Aliton Krenak’s title as the co-ordinator of the Indian Nations’ Union instils authority in the text to speak on behalf of many other Indian nations. The text is seemingly a direct transcription of Aliton Krenak’s speech at a public hearing that the UN held in Sao Paulo, with quotation marks to signify direct quotation. Aliton Krenak thus addresses the reader in first-person singular as though he or she was actually there, stating, ‘I am here as the son of a small nation’. This ‘here’ becomes both the ‘here’ of the text and the ‘here’ of the public hearing. After introducing himself with the first-

⁹¹ WCED 29.

person singular ‘I’, the he shifts to the first-person plural ‘we’ to state, ‘[w]e are a micro-country—a micro nation’.

In terms of content, the text partly follows the structure of a testimony. Aliton Krenak accounts for the injustices committed against the Krenak Indian Nation at the hands of the Brazilian government and appeals for correction of these injustices. There are also spiritual or religious reflections that are reminiscent of reflections in the main text. According to Aliton Krenak, ‘[w]e can no longer see the planet that we live upon as if it were a chess-board where people just move things around. We cannot consider the planet as something isolated from the cosmic’. With the apparent commensurability between these reflections and those of the main text, *Our Common Future* exemplifies the need to integrate the valuable knowledge of ‘traditional peoples’. At this point, the pronoun shifts to the global ‘we’ along the lines of the ‘we’ used in the main text.

As mentioned above, Krenak’s speech serves as a counter-signature authorising the message of *Our Common Future*. The sharp division between traditional and modern allows the text box to function as ‘the voice of tradition’ speaking directly to the reader. This establishes an equivalence between this this voice and the message of *Our Common Future* and furthers the connection between political project of environmentalism and indigenous rights movement.

3.5 Summary

Our Common Future sought to bridge certain divides and disagreements that were present in environmental debates at the time it was written. Publications such as *Limits to Growth* posed a question that generated tensions between rich and poor countries. The representatives of rich nations could not accept measures that would imply reduction in living standards, while representatives of poor nations wanted to ensure that the proposed policy would not bar them from rising to this level themselves. Indigenous peoples stand outside this dichotomy, and are already and have always been ahead of ‘us’ in accepting the ‘new reality’ brought on by the image of the ‘fragile ball’ from space. Nevertheless, *Our Common Future* argues that they are also the most threatened by environmental degradation as the last remaining vestiges of human communities living in harmony with nature. The text thus absorbs the plight of Indigenous peoples into the environmental political project as an element equivalent to the larger chain centred on the ‘marriage of economy and ecology’. As we shall see, Greenpeace articulation will share some similar features, though with important differences.

4. Greenpeace's Articulation of the Ecologically Noble Savage

We have now seen *Our Common Future's* articulation of the Ecologically Noble savage, and now I turn to Greenpeace during its founding moment in 1970-1971 over a decade earlier.

This chapter explains how Greenpeace utilised the writings of Hunter to articulate a political project which synthesised Native American mythology and spiritualism with environmentalism. As noted in the introduction, the analysis mainly focuses on Hunter writing which became an important part of Greenpeace's political message.

In the foreword to his book *Warriors of the Rainbow*, Hunter makes the following remark about the emergence of Greenpeace:

I don't think for a minute that as a phenomenon Greenpeace was at all "autonomous." It was something that had to happen, that was in some way profoundly unknown way made to happen... With the launching of Greenpeace on the West Coast of Canada... a trace of a long-dormant shamanistic magic wafted over the continent... The magic crossed the lonely North Atlantic... and reached at last the shores of Europe, whence the carnage and the poisoning began, like the ghost of the Red Man holding his hand and saying: No more!⁹²

Hunter wanted to be the 'countercultural prophet' of the newly founded Greenpeace organisation and believed that he and his co-founders could bring about a 'consciousness revolution'.⁹³ Informed by Marshall McLuhan's theories, he believed that this revolution was already under way, as new information technology provided revolutionaries like himself with a 'delivery system' through which they could 'bomb' the minds of those who had yet to join the 'consciousness revolution'.⁹⁴ This idea may be the main reason why Hunter was attracted to the kind of protest activity that Greenpeace conducted, which sought to generate maximum media attention through risky and provocative civil disobedience. To induce the 'consciousness revolution', Greenpeace needed to convey a set of new values through its protests with the help of various kinds of imagery that derive from 'holistic philosophy'.⁹⁵ This kind of media stunt would function as a 'mind bomb' that, with the help of media, could 'target with complete accuracy to strike at a point precisely two inches behind the victim's eyes... Not even a hydrogen bomb can affect so many people at once'.⁹⁶ Hunter believed that the 'Red Man' and his mythology was an important ingredient in this 'mind bomb'.

⁹² Hunter, *Warriors of the Rainbow*, 14.

⁹³ Zelko, Frank. *Make It a Greenpeace!: the Rise of Countercultural Environmentalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. 42-44.

⁹⁴ Zelko 51.

⁹⁵ Zelko 47.

⁹⁶ Zelko 51.

4.1 Mystics and Mechanics: The Synthesis of Science and Religion

Hunter's chronicle *Warriors of the Rainbow* was published first in 1979, before Greenpeace gained the international reputation it has today. The 2011 edition includes a foreword by Kumi Naidoo, an activist who was Executive Director of Greenpeace from 2009 to 2015, in which he describes the book as follows:

The story you hold in your hands is too powerful to ignore. It is the story of the birth and early years of Greenpeace, the most important environmental activist organization to come out of North America. It is a vivid and often hilarious first-hand account of how a group of journalists, anti-nuclear campaigners, mystics and mechanics bickered their way through the 1970s, of how their direct tactics inspired popular movements to save the whales and seals, stop French nuclear weapons tests and live capture of marine mammals and more.⁹⁷

The claim that we cannot ignore this 'story' implies a uniqueness and distinction in historical terms of the events that the book describes. It is not only 'the story of the birth' of the 'most important environmental activist organization' but perhaps also the birth of this kind of a movement as a new phenomenon. Naidoo also invokes the image of a vanguard – 'a group of journalists, anti-nuclear campaigners, mystics and mechanics' – paving the way for new kinds of 'popular movements'. This image is infused with a counter-cultural ethos and embodied in Hunter's own descriptions that 'ventured into a state of mystical, hallucination-induced hippie vision-one where humans are not at the centre of the universe'⁹⁸

The opposition between 'mystics and mechanics' refers to a set of oppositions within Greenpeace in the 1970s.⁹⁹ There was significant disagreement among the founding members in regard to the aims, goals, visions and culture that should underlie the movement, with Hunter representing a particular pole among the numerous approaches to environmentalism.¹⁰⁰ For some of the founders, the 1971 campaign to protest nuclear testing off the coast of Canada did not necessarily fall under the rubric of 'ecology' or 'environmentalism' but was instead a protest against U.S. militarism and political hegemony. Several of the original Greenpeace members had backgrounds in the peace movement, and it was initially not clear whether the organisation was primarily concerned with peace or the environment.¹⁰¹ Some individuals were sceptical about the various ideas that Hunter

⁹⁷ Hunter, *Warriors of the Rainbow*, foreword.

⁹⁸ Hunter, *Warriors of the Rainbow*, foreword.

⁹⁹ Zelko 93.

¹⁰⁰ Zelko 85.

¹⁰¹ Zelko 10-11.

proposed, as he embraced the extensive use of spiritual and religious imagery.¹⁰² Hunter did not reject science, however, and believed in a synthesis between a scientific and mystical approach to environmentalism.

The author's note of the book, which Hunter wrote in 1976, includes a document entitled 'The Greenpeace Declaration of Interdependence', which outlines this approach to environmentalism:

We have arrived at a place in history where decisive action must be taken to avoid a generational environmental disaster. With nuclear reactors proliferating and over nine hundred species on the endangered list, there can be no further delay or our children will be denied their future. The Greenpeace Foundation hopes to simulate practical, intelligent actions to stem the tide of planetary destruction. We are "rainbow people" representing every race, every nation, every living creature. We are patriots, not of any one nation, state or military alliance, but of the entire Earth.¹⁰³

The text invokes a sense of urgency and crisis with its reference to threats of nuclear Armageddon and mass extinction. The future of our children is at stake, and there can be no delay. A tipping point or threshold is approaching, and only action can prevent disaster. However, through 'practical, intelligent actions' by a group of 'rainbow people' who represent all of humanity and the 'entire Earth', hope is still alive. This claim elicits an image of a vanguard embodied by a wide range of people in line with a counter-cultural ethos. The phrase 'rainbow people' reoccurs frequently in Hunter's writings and refers to the Rainbow Warrior prophecy. This alliance under the banner of the rainbow also lays claim to a 'radical' universality. The rainbow people represent not only all humans but also all living creatures, which reveals the contours of a hegemonic articulation that seeks to expand its political activity to new domains through the establishment of equivalences. The 'rainbow people' become a nodal point around which 'every race, nation and living creature' stand in a metonymic relation. This chain of equivalence derives its identity in opposition to another chain: the rainbow people are 'not one nation, state or military alliance'. I further analyse this attempt to construct this 'radical' universality using the Rainbow Warrior motif that derives from the prophecy below.

Science, and the field of ecology in particular, is a central component of Hunter's vision for a different future:

¹⁰² The main critic of Hunter's ideas was Jim Bohlen, another cofounder of Greenpeace. See Zelko chapter 4.

¹⁰³ Hunter, *Warriors of the Rainbow*, 11.

It must be understood that the innocent word “ecology” contains a concept that is as revolutionary as anything since the Copernican breakthrough, when it was discovered that the Earth was not the center of the entire universe. Through ecology, science has embarked on a quest for the great systems of order that underlay the complex flow of life on our planet. This quest has taken us far beyond the realm of traditional scientific thought. Like religion, ecology seeks to understand the infinite mysteries of life itself. Harnessing the tools of logic, deduction, analysis and empiricism, ecology may prove to be the first true science-religion. As surely as Copernicus taught us that the Earth is not the center of the universe, ecology teaches us that humanity is not the center of this planet. Each species has its function in the scheme of life. Each has a role, however obscure that role may be.¹⁰⁴

The synthesis of science and religion in the concept of ecology represents a historical disruption on the level of the Copernican breakthrough. As illustrated above, *Our Common Future* also appealed to the concept of a Copernican Revolution to describe the oncoming or already achieved paradigmatic shift in our understanding of nature. Both Hunter and *Our Common Future* thus shared this reflexive self-understanding that saw themselves as bringing forth a new paradigm in the fundamental relationship between society and nature. I return to this shared feature in the comparison.

In this break, science has made ‘us’ surpass ‘traditional scientific thought’ through ecology, which implies a reversal of the more common conception that science leads out of religion. Instead, science leads back to religion, as we contend with ‘infinite mysteries of life itself’. The ‘mystics and mechanics’ opposition is thus not a binary disagreement over mysticism versus science. Rather, some believe that humanity could protect the environment solely through a scientific approach to the issues at hand. People like Hunter, however, wanted to supplement the scientific approach with a spiritual and religious dimension. According to Hunter’s understanding of the word, ‘ecology’ is therefore a concept that leads both backwards and forwards:

Ecology has taught us that the entire Earth is part of our body and that we must learn to respect it as we respect ourselves. As we love ourselves, we must love all forms of life in the planetary system—the whales, the seals, the forests and the seas. The tremendous beauty of ecological thought is that it shows us a pathway back to an understanding of the natural world—an understanding that is imperative if we are to avoid a total collapse of the global ecosystem.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Hunter, *Warriors of the Rainbow*, 12.

¹⁰⁵ Hunter, *Warriors of the Rainbow*, 12.

Ecology leads ‘us’ into the future by providing an understanding of nature that breaks with the current trend towards environmental destruction. It can only do so, however, by simultaneously offering ‘us a pathway back’ to some sort of original lost understanding. Although Hunter might have several sources of lost understanding in mind, Native American spiritualism and religion assumes a privileged role in illuminating this pathway. To understand why and how this is the case, I turn to the myth and, subsequently, its entextualisation and interpretation by Hunter.

4.2 ‘Return of the Spirit’: The Prophecy of the Rainbow Warriors’ Coming

‘Return of the Spirit’, or the prophecy of the coming of the Rainbow Warriors, portrays an old Native American woman named Eyes of the Fire who attempted to imbue her grandson with wisdom that was lost due to the advent of modernity and European colonisation. In his book *Red Blood* (1999), Hunter notes that a Cree medicine man confirmed to him in 1976 that the Rainbow Warriors had been a major feature of Cree legends ‘for hundreds of years’, though I have been unable to corroborate this claim.¹⁰⁶¹⁰⁷ In a ‘note’ preceding the text, Willoya and Brown state that ‘[w]e have deliberately named no tribe in this story because we want it to mean the same to all tribes, to all Indians’.¹⁰⁸

The text is partly a dialogue in which the young boy asks a series of questions to his grandmother and partly depictions of the boy’s adventures into nature. The following question prompts the plot: ‘Why did our Grandfather in the sky allow the white men to take our lands, Oldest Mother?’¹⁰⁹ She cannot immediately answer the question because ‘[t]his is a question to be asked by a warrior, not a boy.’ Thus, he must first become a ‘purified one, a spirit seeker’,¹¹⁰ which necessitates him to embark on a series of solo expeditions into nature. With each expedition into nature, the boy grows in physical strength and gains mystical wisdom about his ancestors and traditions. Once the boy has completed his purification in nature, the old woman answers the question with a prophecy. It is ultimately revealed that the white man’s conquest of the Indian land was part of a divine plan. Because the white men had only lived among themselves, they needed to ‘learn about other races and learn to live with

¹⁰⁶ Hunter, Robert. *Red Blood*. McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 1999. 42.

¹⁰⁷ Zelko questions whether Willoya and Brown’s rendering of the legends was faithful to their original spirit. See Zelko 89.

¹⁰⁸ Willoya, William, and Vinson Brown. *Warriors of the Rainbow: Strange and Prophetic Indian Dreams*. Healdsburg, California: Naturegraph Company, 1962. 2.

¹⁰⁹ Willoya, Brown 4.

¹¹⁰ Willoya, Brown 7.

them'.¹¹¹ The white man's conquest humbled the Indians and cleansed them of 'all selfish pride', which in turn made them 'read for a great awakening and they will awaken others'. They would see that 'their people in the old days were in tune with something more wonderful, the Spirit of Life'. The reawakened Indians would then venture out into the world 'spreading not only love between all races, but also between different religions'. As the old woman explains this to her grandson, 'a great rainbow flaming [appears] in the sky where a thunderstorm had passed', whereupon she remarks the following:

"The rainbow is a sign from Him who is in all things," said the old, wise one. "It is a sign of the union of all peoples like one big family. Go to the mountaintop, child of my flesh, and learn to be a Warrior of the Rainbow, for it is only by spreading love and joy to others that hate in this world can be changed to understanding and kindness, and war and destruction shall end!"¹¹²

4.3 Hunter's Recontextualisation and Interpretation of the Myth

Hunter derives a certain authority through a 'intertextual performance' or 'interperformance' between his own text and that of the myth. According to Richard Bauman, all speech communities rely on interperformance to extract 'ready-made discourses from one context and fitting it to another'.¹¹³ More specifically, this is done through a process of 'entextualisation', which can be defined as 'the formal processes associated with producing particular types of texts in the service of social and political agendas.'¹¹⁴ In order to achieve this function, Hunter 'entextualises' the myth into his chronicle with an account of how he obtained it:

I had on board a copy of a well-worn pamphlet containing a collection of North American Indian prophecies and myths. It had been given to me, rather mysteriously, by a Jewish dulcimer maker who described himself as a gypsy and predicted that the book would reveal a "path" that would affect my life.

The qualifier 'well-worn' imbues the pamphlet with authenticity as an artefact with a history. The identifications 'Jewish dulcimer maker' and 'gypsy' further establish authenticity through loose associations to tradition and folk culture. The claim that the book would reveal

¹¹¹ Willoya, Brown 15.

¹¹² Willoya, Brown 15.

¹¹³ Bauman, Richard. *A World of Other Words. Cross-cultural Perspectives on Intertextuality*, 8.

¹¹⁴ Briggs, Charles L. "Metadiscursive Practices and Scholarly Authority in Folkloristics." *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 106, no. 422, 1993, 387.

a 'path' for Hunter redoubles the prophetic dimension of the myth and presents it as a fortune on a personal level. Furthermore, the common association between so-called gypsies and clairvoyance strengthens this fortune-telling aspect. These interperformative aspects have the combined effect of lending a degree of authority to Hunter's articulation of his 'science-religion' and the incorporation of Native American mythology into this synthesis.

Similarly to *Our Common Future*, Hunter relies on the same process of purification and erasure that Bauman and Briggs have described to establish a sharp division between tradition and modernity. The mysterious nature of this encounter erases the process by which modern citation practices produced the myth and thus situates it as a 'pure' source of traditional wisdom. Tradition thus becomes a moment in the chain of equivalence that is partially outlined above. The Rainbow Warriors stand on the side of tradition, which in turn makes the modern a moment on the opposing chain.

Hunter mobilises a further 'interperformative' or 'entextualising' device in describing how his fellow Greenpeace co-founders responded to the myth:

I hauled out my copy of *The Warriors of the Rainbow* and passed it around. Predictably, the older men were less impressed than the youngsters.¹¹⁵

Argyrou has argued that this comment from Hunter reveals the paradigmatic divide that the introduction has outlined.¹¹⁶ The 'older men' thus represent entrenched 'empiricism of the modernist paradigm', who find little value in Native American spirituality, while the 'youngsters' identify a view of nature that fits with their conception of environmentalism. This further sharpens the division between the traditional and the modern, though with the twist that the 'youngsters' simultaneously represent those who respect tradition and those who will yield a new order, while 'the older men' are stuck in a 'modern paradigm'. Consequently, 'Rainbow Peoples' or 'Warriors' are also equivalent to the youth or the ascendant generation that can achieve a better future.

There is one final entextualising feature that made the prophecy particularly relevant for Hunter and his co-protestors:

rainbows *did* appear several times the following day and it all *did* seem somehow magical as we chugged through a maze of inlets and channels and sounds and bays.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Hunter, *Warriors of the Rainbow*, 44.

¹¹⁶ Argyrou 66.

¹¹⁷ Hunter, *Warriors of the Rainbow*, 44.

The implication is that Hunter and the other members of Greenpeace at the time were the embodiment of the coming of the Rainbow Warriors. The protest action become a performance bringing the prophecy to life.

The myth and associated imagery function as an overarching theme in Hunter's chronicle. The protest drew media attention and commentary from public figures, with the American Western film actor John Wayne denouncing the protest and calling the protestors 'a bunch of commies'.¹¹⁸ At the same time, Chief Dan George, one of the most famous Indian actors in Hollywood, expressed support of the protest. Hunter welcomes this opposition between the most famous cowboy actor and the Indian actor and views it as a testament to the authenticity of the actions that Greenpeace would undertake. During the voyage in 1971, the Kwakiutl tribe on the coast of Canada invited Greenpeace protestors to accept a 'blessing'.¹¹⁹ They would stop by the village twice on the voyage: once on the way out and once on the way back. In his description of the final visit, Hunter remarked that the prophecy 'began to come true.'¹²⁰ According to Hunter, the support from Chief Dan George and the opposition from John Wayne coupled with the blessing received from the Kwakiutl 'seemed to chinch the vague affinity most of us already felt with the Indians'.¹²¹ In his chronicle, Hunter does not explicitly expand much on this 'vague affinity' that he and his co-protestors felt for the Indians, but his interpretation of the myth offers insight into the relevance of this affinity for the Greenpeace founders:

It contained one particular prophecy made some two hundred years ago by an old Cree grandmother named Eyes of Fire, who saw a time coming when birds would fall out of the skies, the fish poisoned in their streams, the deer would drop in their tracks in the forest, and the seas would be "blackened"-all thanks to the White Man's greed and technology. At that time, the Indian people would have all but completely lost their spirit. They would find it again, and they would begin to teach the White Man how to have reverence for Mother Earth. Together, using the symbol of the rainbow, all the races of the world would band together to spread the great Indian teaching and go forth-Warriors of the Rainbow-to bring an end to the destruction and desecration of sacred Earth.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Hunter, *Warriors of the Rainbow*, 35.

¹¹⁹ Hunter, *Warriors of the Rainbow*, 44.

¹²⁰ Hunter, *Warriors of the Rainbow*, 105.

¹²¹ Hunter, *Warriors of the Rainbow*, 44.

¹²² Hunter, *Warriors of the Rainbow*, 44.

Hunter recontextualises the prophecy by interpreting it to concern ending the ‘destruction and desecration of sacred Earth’. The conflict between ‘the white man’ and the Indian is not only an ethnic or cultural conflict between two people but also a symptom of an underlying pathology that is rooted in ‘the White Man’s greed and technology’. Hunter paraphrases the prophecy liberally, writing that Eyes of Fire ‘saw a time coming when birds would fall out of the skies, the fish poisoned in their streams, the deer would drop in their tracks in the forest’. In the myth, the destruction of nature is a consequence of the White Man’s conquest of the Indian; hence, Hunter’s interpretation implies an intimate connection between the arrival of the White Man and a ‘fall’ into ‘desecration of Earth’. The Indian’s ‘loss of spirit’ and destruction of nature thus have the same cause.

The prophecy foretells that ‘one day the Indian would wake up’ and return to ‘living in tune’ with the ‘spirit of life’. According to Hunter’s reading, the Indian would then eventually teach the white man to have reverence for ‘Mother Earth’. The lesson of the story, however, is that the re-awakened Indians, or the Rainbow Warriors, would spread ‘love and joy to others [so] that hate in this world can be changed to understanding and kindness, and war and destruction shall end!’.¹²³ The focus is on resolving the tension between different peoples and rather than between people and nature. The primary calamity in the story is against Indians, not nature. The protagonist of the story asks the old woman why God allowed the white man to take land away from the Indians. The destruction of said land, or nature, and the reversal of this situation is secondary to the Indians regaining their status and land.

If the primary theme is ethnic conflict and the prophesy of impending harmony between the conflicting ethnic groups, then it is interesting to consider how and why Hunter reads it as a story of teaching ‘the white man’ to have reverence for ‘mother nature’. I am not claiming that Hunter erroneously projects an environmental agenda onto the myth and simply co-opts for his own purposes; instead, the Cree story has certain features that allow it to function as a source of inspiration for environmentalists.

To uncover the function and meaning behind the ‘vague affinity’, I turn to the concept of hegemony and Argyrou’s claim of a shift in the conception of nature. The ethnic divide within the myth introduces a pair of equivalences that is analogous to Laclau and Mouffe’s ‘coloniser’ and ‘colonised’ example. The white man is equivalent to ‘greed and technology’ and exemplified by the commie-hating cowboy John Wayne. The nuclear test off the coast of Canada also enters into this equivalence, and the US with its military industrial complex

¹²³ Willoya, Brown 15.

becomes another link in this chain. According to Hunter, all of the small Greenpeace crew agreed that the nuclear test off the coast of Canada ‘was a potent symbol of war craziness and environmental degradation wrapped up into one’.¹²⁴ The nuclear test establishes equivalence between war and environmental degradation and peace and environmentalism. Choosing war means also choosing environmental degradation, and vice versa. This equivalence also illustrates the aforementioned ambiguity of early Greenpeace, which encompassed a peace movement with which many of its founders had experience, with several having even fled from the US to Canada to avoid the Vietnam War draft.¹²⁵ Others, like Hunter, were more concerned with the emerging environmental movement.¹²⁶¹²⁷

Rainbow warriors represent the other side of this equivalence of the white man, greed, technology, the ‘war craziness’ of the Cold War and environmental degradation. For Hunter, the rainbow warriors became the name for the chain of equivalence that connected Native Americans, the peace movement and environmentalism. Establishing these links allows Hunter to solve two problems simultaneously. First, he reduces environmental degradation to the white man’s greed and technology while also intimately tying it to the excess of war. This insight can be valuable when searching for solutions to the threat to the environment. Second, by integrating Native Americans with an associated conception of nature and the world, the struggle to save the environment becomes equivalent to the same struggle to end injustice towards Native Americans. To make this last point, we have to return to Argyrou.

As the introduction has discussed, Argyrou has claimed that there has been a shift in the conceptions of nature and man. This shift has also changed the way in which environmentalists, such as Greenpeace, have interpreted the myths and religious rituals of those who European ethnographic tradition previous categorised as ‘savages’. The shift from a metaphorical to a literal interpretation counters the claim that the metaphorical interpretation is ethnocentric towards Western scientific metaphysics. The Warriors of the Rainbow story contains this charge of ethnocentrism against the white man and his ways. According to Eyes of Fire in the story, ‘the white man killed the spirit of the Indian peoples’, but this was an act of God because the white man had to learn about other races and learn to live with them.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Hunter, *Warriors of the Rainbow*, 24.

¹²⁵ Zelko 26.

¹²⁶ Zelko 10-11.

¹²⁷ At the meeting where they planned the 1971 protest against the nuclear arms test, a member of the committee closed the meeting by exclaiming “Peace”, to which a young Canadian named Bill Darnell responded: “Make it a *green* peace.”¹²⁷ Apparently this was the origin of the name Greenpeace, although today the emphasis in the mainstream conception of the organisation is on green rather than peace.

¹²⁸ Willoya, Brown 8.

The ‘killing of the Indian spirit’ was necessary so that Indians could become ‘cleansed of all selfish pride’ and made them ready for a ‘great awakening and they will awaken others’.¹²⁹ This awakening would prompt a return to a state in which Indians and all who they awakened would live ‘in tune’ with ‘the Spirit of Life’.¹³⁰ As noted above, this awakening primarily concerns ‘spreading love between races, but also between different religions’.¹³¹ For Hunter, however, such awakening also entails a harmonious relationship between society and nature. Selfish pride and hubris are thus the causes of destructive relations between humans and between humans and nature. Furthermore, as the Mystics and Mechanics section has indicated, Hunter believes that ‘the quest’ to instil a ‘reverence towards Mother Earth’ takes ‘us far beyond the realm of traditional scientific thought’.¹³² Ecology, ‘like religion... seeks to understand the infinite mysteries of life itself’. This seems to be an attempt to extend beyond the ‘disenchanted’ view of the world that is commonly associated with Western scientific metaphysics and reintroduce a spiritual dimension into our understanding of ‘nature’ or ‘the environment’. Taken together, an awakening removes us from selfish pride and hubris but returns us to spiritual mysticism.

The myth provides Hunter with worldview in which nature is not a disenchanted domain. Instead, the worldview implicit in the myth finds a world, wherein inanimate objects, plants and animals ‘objectively’ possess qualities such as intentions, souls or teloses. Therefore, Hunter might have found special interest in the myth because this worldview fits with a shift away from metaphorical to literal interpretation. As shown in the introduction, Argyou argued that radical environmentalists abandoned the privileging of Western scientific metaphysics where nature is a disenchanted domain. In other books by Hunter, he revealed among other things that he believes plants to have emotions and that ‘non-physical’ relations might exist between humans and plants.¹³³ Furthermore he claimed that

Evidence is begging to accumulate that plants have emotions, that there is a “pool” of vegetable consciousness which functions telepathically across great distances and possesses memory.¹³⁴

Whether there is any connection between these reflections and his affinity for the myth remains speculative of course, but as a hypothesis this connection confirms Argyou’s claim

¹²⁹ Willoya, Brown 14.

¹³⁰ Willoya, Brown 15.

¹³¹ Willoya, Brown 15.

¹³² Hunter, *Warriors of the Rainbow*, 11.

¹³³ Hunter, Robert. *Storming of the Mind*. Doubleday & Company, Inc, 1972. 90.

¹³⁴ Hunter, *Storming of the Mind*, 90.

about a shift in interpretive strategy of Native American mythology by radical environmentalists like Hunter. I am not claiming that Hunter derived his ideas about plants from Native American myths. Rather, as Argyrou argues, the claim is that this kind of worldview is latent in Western culture and that it may have risen to prominence due to various circumstances around the 1960s or 1970s.¹³⁵ Native American mythology then became more relevant for people like Hunter as a result and seemed to confirm ‘what the already knew’.

The myth emphasises the intimate relationship between animals and humans, as ‘the animal and the Indians are brothers’.¹³⁶ Plants and humans also share unity, and the myth contains descriptions of a boy hunting alone in nature in mystical communion with plants: ‘Trees and shadows and grass merged with his spirit in the new dawn’.¹³⁷ This unity also extends to inanimate objects or the pure elements: ‘But he poured all his soul into his hunting until he became part of earth, until his brown body merged with leaf and rock and trunk as if no human being was there’.¹³⁸ The boy also derives ecological wisdom from his mystical communion with nature. After killing a deer, he saw in its eyes:

all the pain of countless animals wounded in the past by men, lying, writhing in traps, or with shattered limbs, and he knew suddenly what he had never understood before, why the wise Indians of old killed only in need for food or clothing or in self defense.¹³⁹

Thus, an awakening also entails entry into this kind of relationship with nature, wherein animals, plants and objects are not simply there for our use and instead possess inherent worth of their own. The boy also realises his awakening by entering into this kind of relation, and it would seem that Hunter follows a similar line of thought.

Adopting this re-imagined relation with nature allows Hunter to establish a strong link between environmentalism and the struggle against injustice towards Indigenous people. As political projects, they both find themselves pitted against a Western ethnocentrism that destabilises relations among humans and between humans and nature. The fixation of all relevant elements that have been discussed so far has made it seem as though the link between environmentalism and indigenous people is a self-evident fact. The connection between the two is essentialised, which presents it as a necessary consequence of deep historical processes. The establishment this essential connection solidifies the hegemonic form of

¹³⁵ Argyrou 67

¹³⁶ Willoya, Brown 9.

¹³⁷ Willoya, Brown 12.

¹³⁸ Willoya, Brown 12.

¹³⁹ Willoya, Brown 12.

Hunter's articulation. Environmental degradation and injustice towards Indians became equivalent political problems with equivalent political projects.

4.4 Greenpeace's use of the Rainbow Warriors Prophecy

The motif of the Warriors of the Rainbow assumes a central place in the imagery of Greenpeace. The organisation adopted this motif in its official imagery and rhetoric, with several of the ships that it has used in protest actions being named Rainbow Warrior. All Greenpeace ships have green hulls with a rainbow painted on the side, and membership publications, such as *The Greenpeace Story*, often include images of rainbows on the front page as well as in the general colour scheme of the formatting.

The 1991 membership magazine includes a summary of the early years of Greenpeace.¹⁴⁰ It directly quotes Hunter's book, specifically the parts where he mentions the prophecy and how he brought the book on the first protest voyage. The account of the importance of this Native American myth for the early days of Greenpeace includes a photograph of all of the founding members who were present at the Kwakiutl ceremony. In 2011, the 40th-anniversary edition of the membership magazine even listed the Native American woman of the story, Eyes of Fire, in its list of 'The Women Who Founded Greenpeace'.¹⁴¹ This publication also includes an article entitled 'How Greenpeace adopted a Native American legend', which contains the same image of the members at the Kwakiutl ceremony as in the 1991 edition. The article recounts Hunter's story of acquiring the book and bringing it on the first protest voyage off the coast of Canada. In the foreword, Naidoo states that '[m]ost organizations have mission statements. Thanks to Bob, and to the Cree tale that inspired him, Greenpeace has a prophecy'.¹⁴²

4.5 Summary

Hunter's chronicle of events gives an insight into the set of ideas underlying 'a vague affinity' that he and his co-protestors felt towards Native Americans. For Hunter, this set of ideas surpasses the 'traditional realm of science' and approaches a new kind of science-religion. It is at this point that the Ecologically Noble Savage enters and provides Hunter with a way to use Native American motifs and imagery to articulate a political project of environmentalism. This fusion takes the form of hegemonic politics by aligning two separate political projects

¹⁴⁰ Brown, Michael and John May. *The Greenpeace Story*. 2nd ed., London: Dorling Kindersley, 1991.11-5.

¹⁴¹ Erwood, Steve. *The Greenpeace Chronicles*. Amsterdam: Greenpeace International, 2011. 16.

¹⁴² Hunter, *Warriors of the Rainbow*, foreword.

into one. Like *Our Common Future*, the articulation reproduces the purified categories of 'traditional' and 'modern', although for Hunter, they stand in a more antagonistic relation. This antagonism also becomes equivalent to a series of other antagonisms, e.g. the White Man against the Red Man, greed and technology against reverence for mother Earth, Rainbow peoples against nation, race and military alliances. Hunter also makes himself and Greenpeace a direct embodiment of the Rainbow Warriors through the interperformative and entextualizing devices in his book.

5. Struggle for Hegemony: Greenpeace vs. *Our Common Future*

We have now seen two cases of texts that construct the figure of the Ecologically Noble Savage as an element in articulations of discourses on environmentalism. This chapter compares and contrasts Greenpeace's and *Our Common Future*'s articulations. With regards to differences between the two, I compare the different ways the texts achieve universality through a hegemonic articulation. The comparison will also make shared connection with the Noble Savage from older European thought and culture more explicit. In addition, I briefly explore the Ecologically Noble Savage beyond Greenpeace and *Our Common Future*. Finally,

5.1 Differences

As Chapter 2 has indicated, a successful hegemonic articulation grants the appearance of universality to a political project. In comparing the respective articulations of *Our Common Future* and Greenpeace, it seems fruitless to ask which appears more universal, as the answer depends on the context in which one poses this question. A more suitable inquiry may regard the difference in quality, as opposed to quantity, of the universality that these articulations achieve. As the introduction has noted, the nature of the UN and its reliance on consensus has led *Our Common Future* to represent a more moderate position compared to Greenpeace's more radical brand of environmentalism. This difference has certain implications for the role of the Noble Savage as an element of their articulations.

The analysis of *Our Common Future* demonstrates how the text attempts to dissolve the tension between rich and poor nations. Although inequality and poverty are real, affirmed problems, it is possible to overcome the antagonism between rich and poor, and doing so is essential to both saving the environment and raising the standards of living for the poor: 'the changes required [to achieve sustainable development] involve all countries, large and small, rich and poor'.¹⁴³ As the analysis has illustrated, the category of 'traditional and tribal peoples' belongs on neither side of the rich-poor dichotomy, which allows it to mediate the two. *Our Common Future* recommends policies that would allow

earnings from traditional activities [to] be increased through the introduction of marketing arrangements that ensure fair price for produce, but also through steps to conserve and enhance the resources base and increase resource productivity.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ WCED 11.

¹⁴⁴ WCED 116.

Thus, there is no inherent antagonism between ‘traditional activities’ and market capitalism.

Our Common Future articulates a chain of equivalence that relies on oppositions that differ from those of Greenpeace. Whereas *Our Common Future* attempts to create a ‘marriage of economy and ecology’ in opposition to a ‘lack of development’ and ‘unintended consequences of economic growth’, Greenpeace through Hunter connects ‘greed and technology’, ‘the white man’, ‘military alliances’ and ethnocentrism into a chain that opposes the Rainbow Warriors. Hence, the universality of *Our Common Future*’s articulation is, in a certain sense, more inclusive than that of Greenpeace. In theory, no person, group or culture falls outside of the chain of equivalence, and only a ‘lack’ or ‘unintended consequences’ negatively relate to this hegemony. In contrast, the identity ‘Rainbow warriors’ or ‘Rainbow people’ negates national, religious and Western identities and requires an abandonment of one’s particular (previous) identity. This also means Greenpeace’s articulation has a stronger antagonism between the opposing chains of equivalence.

As the analysis has evidenced, *Our Common Future* and Greenpeace both attribute ecological knowledge and wisdom to indigenous peoples. This is expressed through different registers. *Our Common Future* stresses the value of this knowledge and wisdom for the purpose of economic management. The disappearance of this knowledge ‘is a loss for larger society’ because it could provide insights into ‘sustainably managing very complex ecological systems.’¹⁴⁵ For Hunter, the emphasis is instead on the spiritual dimension and a change in our attitude towards our relationship with nature. By consulting Native American mythology, Hunter may have sought to realize his vision of ecology as ‘science-religion’. If Hunter’s ‘vague affinity’ towards Native Americans stems from the worldview implicit in the myth as I suggested in the analysis, then this would also be a further point of divergence. There is little to suggest that *Our Common Future* argued for an abandonment of any kind of Western scientific metaphysics. The need to see development and the environment as inseparable does not seem to require a reconsideration of our relation to plants or immaterial objects as Hunter may have considered necessary in order to attain the proper ‘reverence for Mother Earth’. *Our Common Future* thus considers indigenous peoples from a more academic and disinterested register as opposed to Hunter.

¹⁴⁵ WCED 114-115.

5.2 Similarities

There are three main similarities between the articulations of Greenpeace and *Our Common Future*. First, the articulations assume a hegemonic form through the establishment of an equivalence between the struggle of indigenous peoples against oppression or marginalisation and a political project of environmentalism. Second, they both attribute the possession of ecological wisdom and knowledge to indigenous peoples. Finally, they employ the Noble Savage figure as a textual device to critique contemporary society along similar lines to Rousseau.

1. Equivalence between Indigenous peoples struggle and environmentalism. *Our Common Future* and Greenpeace both re-articulate the Noble Savage in environmental discourses. As the analysis of *Our Common Future* has revealed, overturning the current neglect of ‘both human and environmental considerations’ in our political institutions through a marriage of ‘ecology and economy’ can save the environment from destruction and spare ‘traditional or tribal peoples’ from ‘cultural extinction’. This equivalence articulates the Noble Savage in discourse on environmentalism within a hegemonic form.

Greenpeace’s articulation shares the same feature of equivalence between the status of indigenous people and an environmental political project. The central link between the two lies in a certain kind of Western ethnocentrism. For Hunter, the prophecy or myth is a story of both how the white man’s ethnocentrism undermines Native American society and culture and how this ethnocentrism leads to the desecration of ‘Mother Earth’. The prediction of the revival of Native American culture with the arrival of the Rainbow Warriors is also a prophecy about the revival of relationship of humans to nature. Thus, there is equivalence between both ‘revivals’.

In view of this, the two texts, as articulations of a political project, surpass an original ‘mandate’ in a sense. This feature of Greenpeace and *Our Common Future* is analogous to Laclau and Mouffe’s example of a trade union or church expanding their activity ‘beyond traditional practices ascribed to them’ by assuming organisational responsibilities in a community. There are significant differences between these environmental organisations and this trade union or church example, but in each case, the underlying meaning of their political projects change as they expand beyond the ‘original’ domain.

2. Indigenous peoples possess an original lost understanding of nature. As shown in the analysis of *Our Common Future*, Indigenous communities are thought to possess ‘vast accumulations of traditional knowledge and experience that links humanity with its ancient

origins.¹⁴⁶ Likewise, Hunter sought a ‘pathway back to an understanding of the natural’ and finds this in Native American mythology.¹⁴⁷ For both texts then, Indigenous people represent something along the lines of mankind in its ‘childhood’ or in a state of innocence, where the relationship with nature was more simple and spontaneous.

3. The Noble Savage as a textual device to critique contemporary society. Both *Our Common Future* and Greenpeace reproduce Rousseau’s mode of critique of contemporary society through their employment of the Noble Savage. As noted, neither Greenpeace nor *Our Common Future* have explicitly employed the phrase noble savage. However, I have illustrated how *Our Common Future*’s category of ‘traditional or tribal peoples’ and Hunter’s ‘Indians’ implicitly rely on this figure as a textual device. Although the analysis has thus far demonstrated how both texts produce characterisations of indigenous people as living in harmony with nature, they have specific aspects that replicate Rousseau’s ‘primordial man’, which, as the introduction has stated, is the canonical case of the Noble Savage in this thesis.

At the most basic level, such attributions of ecological wisdom and knowledge remind us of Rousseau’s primordial men, who could ‘nourish themselves of herbs and nuts’. Both Hunter’s Indians and *Our Common Future*’s indigenous people share even more similarities with Rousseau’s primordial man, however. As the introduction has noted, Rousseau used his ‘primordial man’ in his critique of contemporary society. Likewise, Hunter and *Our Common Future* construct contrasts between modern man or ‘the white man’ and indigenous peoples, which function as critiques of the former to varying degrees. Rousseau wanted to explain how the issues that he and others perceived to be ‘vices of civilisation’ did not originate in ‘the state of nature’ but were instead ‘formed in society’.¹⁴⁸ The concept of the ‘primordial man’ and its contrast to the ‘civilised man’ makes this evident. Similarly, the contrast between the Indian or ‘traditional or tribal peoples’ and modern humans situates the origin of environmental degradation in modern society rather than as a consequence of some kind of innate ‘human nature’. While Hunter assigns the blame to ‘the white man’s’ ethnocentrism in the form of ‘greed and technology’ and *Our Common Future* to ‘insensitive development’ and poverty, all of these causes are tied to modernity. Thus, both sources share Rousseau’s mode of critique, which constructs the Noble Savage as a contrast to contemporary man to separate the ‘artificial’ and the ‘natural’. The destruction of the environment and our inability to live in harmony with nature constitutes ‘the artificial’ in these environmentalist texts. Furthermore,

¹⁴⁶ WCED 114.

¹⁴⁷ Hunter, *Rainbow Warriors*, 12.

¹⁴⁸ Ellingson 80.

like Rousseau, neither Hunter nor *Our Common Future* argues for a return to a ‘primordial state’. Hunter envisions a ‘science-religion’ that synthesises elements from what he perceives to be ‘traditional’ wisdom, while *Our Common Future* seeks to differentiate between good and bad development, possibly on the basis of insights that derive from the knowledge of ‘traditional and tribal peoples’. Compared to Rousseau, however, there is perhaps a stronger redemptive dimension to both compared, as evident from the emphasis on a ‘Copernican Revolution’, which may allow us to redeem ourselves from the ‘fall’ of environmental degradation.

5.3 Beyond *Our Common Future* and Greenpeace

The primary concern of this thesis has been the explication of two specific cases of articulations that have introduced the Noble Savage into discourse on environmentalism. This section briefly discusses the continuation of this articulation beyond these two cases to clarify how they are both part of a historical trend. As I mentioned in the introduction, *Our Common Future* was the first publication or document that made an explicit connection between indigenous people and environmentalism.¹⁴⁹ In the context of environmental activism, I have been unable to find any earlier examples of texts that have made this connection, and it seems that Greenpeace is at least one of the first notable examples. The years following both the foundation of Greenpeace and the publication of *Our Common Future* witnessed a significant increase in interest in connecting the two political domains of the indigenous rights movement and the environmental movement.

The International Labour Organisation adopted the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention of 1989 only two years after the publication of *Our Common Future*. This convention became the main binding international convention concerning indigenous peoples before its replacement by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007. The 1989 convention does not dedicate any specific section to the overlap of environmental issues and the struggle for indigenous rights, but it does stress the importance of environmental considerations for policies that affect indigenous peoples. Furthermore, the convention calls for ‘attention to the distinctive contributions of indigenous and tribal people to the cultural diversity and social and ecological harmony of humankind’.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Argyrou 67.

¹⁵⁰ International Labour Organisation. *Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries*. Geneva, 76th ILC session, 1989, web. Preamble.

The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, also known as the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit, produced a series of documents and conventions that replaces *Our Common Future* as the most recent and relevant UN text on the environment. One of these documents, named Agenda 21, contains a chapter on ‘Recognizing and Strengthening the Role of Indigenous Communities’, which presents a list of proposed actions for the international community to harmonise developmental policies with the rights of indigenous peoples. Echoing *Our Common Future*, the text states that ‘[t]hey have developed over many generations a holistic traditional scientific knowledge of their lands, natural resources and environment’.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, it encourages ‘recognition of their values, traditional knowledge and resource management practices’ as way to promote sustainable development. These texts are only a few examples, but they reflect the durability of *Our Common Future*’s articulation.

Chapter 4 has illustrated how Greenpeace still employs the Warriors of the Rainbow motif in its membership publications and for other purposes, such as the decorations on its ships. Nevertheless, the relationship between indigenous people and Greenpeace has been partly fraught with problems since the 1980s.

The problems started with a series of anti-seal hunting campaigns that began in 1975. These campaigns attained widespread media¹⁵² coverage and led to a ban on sealskin products in the EU in 1983.¹⁵³ This made seal hunting unprofitable and resulted in job losses, and the suicide rate in Inuit communities that relied on the export of pelts to Europe apparently spiked as a result.¹⁵⁴ Greenpeace issued an apology for contributing to this development with its campaigns in 1985 and 2014.¹⁵⁵ To alleviate the negative impact of the campaigns on Inuit communities, Greenpeace hosted a conference in 2012 that invited indigenous leaders from Arctic communities. Subsequently, it issued a policy on indigenous rights and has since worked to improve relations with Inuit communities.¹⁵⁶

Greenpeace has received criticism from both sides for its seal campaigns and their consequences. The choice to issue an apology was denounced by the hardliners within the organisation, including Paul Watson, who was one of the founders.¹⁵⁷ Watson had already left

¹⁵¹ United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). *Agenda 21*. United Nations, 1992, web. Chapter 26.

¹⁵² Zelko 256-259.

¹⁵³ Radio Canada. “Angry Inuk.” *Canadian Broadcast Corporation*, 7 Jan. 2018, web.

¹⁵⁴ Radio Canada.

¹⁵⁵ Greenpeace. “Greenpeace apology to Inuit for impacts of seal campaign. Greenpeace USA, 2014, web.

¹⁵⁶ Greenpeace. “Policy on Indigenous Rights.” Greenpeace, 2014, web.

¹⁵⁷ Watson Paul. “I Do Not Apologize for Opposing the Slaughter of Seals.” Pamela Anderson Foundation, 2016, web.

the organisation in 1977 because he was perceived as overly violent during the anti-sealing campaigns, among other reasons. He eventually created the even more radical organisation the Sea Shepherd Society, which advocates for ‘ecotage’, or ecological sabotage. On the other hand, documentary films such as *Angry Inuk* (2016) have directed significant negative attention towards Greenpeace’s role in the affairs surrounding the seal hunting.¹⁵⁸

5.4 Concluding Remarks

The tension that developed between indigenous communities and Greenpeace could be called a process of ‘disarticulation’. As Laclau and Mouffe, articulations take place in ‘permanently changing conditions which constantly require the construction of new systems of differences.’¹⁵⁹ Thus, they are never permanent and always subject to re-articulation by competing discourses, which threaten to ‘undo’ or radically alter the fixations of a prior articulation. The focus of this thesis has been on the textual construction of the Ecologically Noble Savage rather than how such a construction fares in reality. I only want to stress how each articulation always attempts to overcome obstacles and opposition from competing articulations by bringing in this point about ‘disarticulation’. Both Greenpeace and United Nations committed themselves to make true on their word by producing the articulations investigated here. The meaning of these articulations depends on how the relevant actors and institutions ‘live up to’ them in hindsight. They create the ‘middle ground’, mentioned in the introduction, with a ‘mutually comprehensible world characterized by new systems of meaning and exchange.’¹⁶⁰ These texts constitute one side of this middle ground, but may open up the possibility of an exchange with the other side.

The hegemonic articulations analysed in this thesis employ the Ecologically Noble Savage to establish equivalence and difference in a network of concepts and identities at play in the environmental discourse. Greenpeace and UN both attempted to derive a certain universality through such equivalences. The differences between the articulation show the flexibility or fluidity of the Ecologically Noble Savage as an element in the discourses. While such differences result in quite different meanings to the figure in each case, it reproduces familiar features of the older version of the figure, most notably as a point of contrast from contemporary society.

¹⁵⁸ Official webpage of the film: https://www.nfb.ca/film/angry_inuk/.

¹⁵⁹ Laclau, Mouffe 139.

¹⁶⁰ Conklin, Beth A., and Laura R. Graham. 696.

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