

Helen Kopnina

Critical pedagogy

Business students learning from A Story of the Earth Liberation Front

Abstract

While environmentalism is often associated with different non-governmental organizations, agencies, movements, institutions, and grassroots groups, one of the least understood types of environmentalism is so-called radical activism. This article will argue that the label of radicalism or even terrorism attached to some forms of environmental activism precludes learning about the causes of environmental crises. Based on the work of Paulo Freire in critical pedagogy and ecopedagogy, this article supports the position that learning about social and political framing of "radicalism" as well as the issues that drive this "radical" action help the development of critical thinking and ethical judgment in students. Ecopedagogy dictates that despite the idea of being broadly shared, plural and democratic, the concept of *paideia*, an ancient Greek idea of universal education, has led to a tradition of normative anthropocentric thought. By analyzing student reflection essays on the film *If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front*, this article draws lessons in ecological citizenship and critical thinking.

Keywords

critical pedagogy; ecological citizenship; ecopedagogy; environmentalism; sustainability

Introduction

Global environmentalism has many manifestations and appears in many guises. Manuel Castells discussed environmentalism as, despite differences, collectively, a movement of resistance to global capital and the hegemony of economic interests.¹ The environmental movement can be summarized as a fight to reorganize the economy-driven logic of modern industrial society.² Individuals and groups that take direct action against environmentally damaging practices can be demonized by the media, which serves as a mouthpiece of hegemonic government or corporate power keen to protect its interests.³ Consider some examples.

1 M. Castells, *The Power of Identity*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 112-13.

2 Op.cit.

3 R. Kahn, *Critical Pedagogy, Ecopedagogy, and Planetary Crisis: The Ecopedagogy Movement* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010).

Helen Kopnina, Hague University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands
e-mail: h.kopnina@hhs.nl

Studier i Pædagogisk Filosofi | <https://tidsskrift.dk/spf/index> | ISSN nr. 22449140

Årgang 8 | Nr. 1 | 2019 | side 43-68

In Western Europe “governing with the greens was never easy”, as The Economist’s article⁴ reflected on the death of the French environmental activist Remi Fraisse, killed while protesting the building of the dam that threatened biodiversity. Between October 2018 and the time of writing this article, a group called Extinction Rebellion in London and other European capitals drew attention to the government’s and citizens’ contribution to climate change and extinction. Some protestors were arrested.⁵

The East European countries rarely publish statistics on detainees arrested for environmental defense, with symbolic protests expressed through art. For example, in the Russian film *Ne strelayte v belyh lebedey* (*Don’t Shoot the White Swans*) Egor, a gamekeeper, dies defending the swans against the poachers. In a non-fiction world, there are reports of suppression and arrests of Russian activists that protest against the government or corporate neglect of the environment.⁶ During the 2018 climate top (COP 24) in Poland, environmental activists were refused entry or arrested.⁷

A more violent fate awaited environmental activists outside of Western countries.⁸ Between the nineteen-nineties and the present, hundreds of environmental activists were murdered in South and Central America.⁹ In Africa, environmental activism became better recognized since the widely publicized case of Ken Saro-Wiwa and others, executed for protesting against oil companies.¹⁰ In many African countries, local officials often prohibit grassroots protests.¹¹ Poachers or illegal loggers have killed many park rangers.¹²

4 The Economist, “The dam bursts” <https://www.economist.com/europe/2014/11/08/the-dam-bursts> 2014:27

5 D. Gayle, “Shami Chakrabarti warns police over Extinction Rebellion prosecutions”, *The Guardian*. 25. Maj 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/may/25/shami-chakrabarti-warns-police-over-extinction-rebellion-prosecutions>

6 V. Lobanov, “Leading Environmentalists Violently Attacked in Russia”, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/12/leading-environmentalists-violently-attacked-russia>

7 Amnesty International, “Poland: arrests and refusal of entry to environmentalists during the cop24 climate talks”, 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur37/9550/2018/en/>

8 R. Guha, *Environmentalism: Global History*, (New York: Longman, 2000); H. Kopnina, “Revisiting the Lorax complex: Deep ecology and biophilia in cross-cultural perspective”, *Environmental Sociology* 43 nr. 4 (2015): 315-324.

9 J. Watts, “Berta Cáceres, Honduran human rights and environmental activist, murdered”, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/03/honduras-bertha-caceres-murder-environment-activist-human-rights>; R. Cox, “New data reveals 197 land and environmental defenders murdered in 2017”. Global Witness blog, 2018, <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/blog/new-data-reveals-197-land-and-environmental-defenders-murdered-2017/>

10 R. Nixon, “Pipe dreams: Ken Saro-Wiwa, environmental justice, and micro-minority rights.”, *Black Renaissance* 1, no. 1 (1996): 39

11 B. Baletti, T. Johnson & W. Wolford, “‘Late mobilization’ transnational peasant networks and grassroots organizing in Brazil and South Africa”, *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 8 (2008): 290–314; W. Wolford, *This Land is Ours Now: Social Mobilization and the Meanings of Land in Brazil* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010)

12 J. Burke, “Six Virunga park rangers killed in DRC wildlife sanctuary”, *The Guardian*, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/weather/2018/apr/09/six-virunga-park-rangers-killed-in-drc-wildlife-sanctuary>; Global Conservation, “Over one thousand park rangers die in 10 years”, 2018, <http://globalconservation.org/news/over-one-thousand-park-rangers-die-10-years-protecting-our-parks/>

The years 2015 and 2016 have been the deadliest for environmental activists.¹³ According to Global Witness¹⁴, an NGO that works to break the links between natural resource exploitation, conflict, poverty, corruption, and human rights abuses, in 2016, 200 killings across 24 countries were documented, compared to 185 across 16 in 2015. Almost 40% of those murdered were indigenous people in developing countries.¹⁵ In Asia, the environmentalists have paid an equally high toll, with many killed in East Asia,¹⁶ China, India, and Cambodia.¹⁷ In Turkey, peaceful protests to protect the trees in Gezi Park in Istanbul resulted in an escalation of police violence.¹⁸

In the meantime, in the United States, the intensity of protest movements varies from the peaceful sit-in of the Occupy movement¹⁹ to the Native American protests against mining, manufacturing, and capitalism.²⁰ More recently, the policy of institutionalized anti-environmentalism has reached new heights under President Donald Trump's regime (e.g. Gibbens).²¹

These examples of environmentalism vary in motivation, the intensity of protest, and the severity of punishment.²² However, while environmentalism has many manifestations, one of the least understood types of environmentalism in education is associated with "radical" activism. The "radical" groups are labeled so in their society, by the governments or media precisely because they reach the deepest in terms of social critique, addressing entrenched anthropocentrism.²³ The origins of "radicalism" differ from local land-rights

13 G. Holmes, "Environmental activist murders set a record as 2015 became the deadliest year." *The Guardian*, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/jun/20/environmental-activist-murders-global-witness-report>; B. Kyte, "Defenders of the Earth. Global Witness", 2017, <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/defenders-earth/>

14 Kyte, "Defenders of the earth".

15 *Op. cit*

16 R. Blet, "Five Asian environmental activists killed for defending the land and natural resources against exploitation", *South China Morning Post* 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/article/2156958/five-egregious-deaths-asian-environmental-activists-killed-defending-land>.

17 Kyte, "Defenders of the earth"

18 BBC, "Turkey protests: 'It's a fight for freedom'", 2013, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-22753761>

19 S. Van Gelder (red.), *This Changes Everything: Occupy Wall Street and the 99% Movement* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2011).

20 B. Clark, "The Indigenous Environmental Movement in the United States: Transcending Borders in Struggles Against Mining, Manufacturing, and the Capitalist State", *Organization & Environment* 15, no. 4 (2002): 410-442.

21 S. Gibbens, "15 ways the Trump administration has changed environmental policies", *National Geographic*, 2019, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2019/02/15-ways-trump-administration-impacted-environment/>.

22 B.R.Taylor, *Ecological Resistance Movements: The global emergence of radical and popular environmentalism* (SUNY Press 1995); J. Mercier, *Downstream and upstream ecologists. The people, organizations, and ideas behind the movement* (Westport (Connecticut): Praeger, 1997); J.S. Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses. Second Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); R. Gottlieb, "Preface", "Introduction to the Revised Edition" in *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement. Revised and Updated Edition* (Washington D.C.: Island Press, 2005), xiii-40, 389-414.

23 Taylor, *Ecological Resistance*; W. Berry, 1999. In distrust of movements. *The Land Report* 65, 1999: 3-7; Kahn, *Critical Pedagogy*.

protests and anti-logging campaigns²⁴, which can be said to be ‘pragmatic’ or activist’, to more philosophically- inspired environmental movements based on the land ethics²⁵, deep ecology and ecocentrism²⁶, animal rights and welfare movements.²⁷ The radical environmentalism²⁸ is associated with groups like the Earth First!²⁹ Earth Liberation Front (ELF), and Animal Liberation Front (ALF)³⁰. The latter two organizations have been active in the nineteen-nineties were declared America’s number one terrorist threat.³¹ The ELF is an underground organization that “uses direct action in the form of economic sabotage to stop the exploitation and destruction of the natural environment”.³² Groups like the ELF carried out property damage attacks to draw attention to environmental damage caused by corporations and governments that allowed for this.³³

This article will discuss the application of critical pedagogy and ecopedagogy to the Bachelors-level students at The Hague University of Applied Sciences in The Netherlands. In 2017, the students were asked to reflect on the film *If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front* as part of their Business Ethics and Sustainability course. The film, directed by Marshall Curry and Sam Cullman, was released in 2011 and nominated for The Academy Award for Documentary Feature. This film about “radical” environmentalism was shown to expose students to deep ecology, ecocentrism³⁴, and other types of environmental ethics. The documentary tells the story of the ELF’s formation, activities (including arson and pro-

-
- 24 Collinson, H. 1996. Green Guerrillas: environmental conflicts and initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean (Latin America Bureau, Ltd., 1996); C. Mallory, Ecofeminism and Forest Defense in Cascadia: Gender, Theory and Radical Activism. *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 17, no. 1 (2006): 32-49; T.L. Lewis, “Environmental Movements in the Global South” in *Twenty Lessons in Environmental Sociology*, ed. K. Gould and T. Lewis, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009): 244-54; M. Youkee, “Indigenous Chileans defend their land against loggers with radical tactics”, *The Guardian*, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/14/chile-mapuche-indigenous-arson-radical-environmental-protest>.
- 25 A. Leopold, *A Sand County almanac and sketches here and there* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1949).
- 26 A. Naess, “The shallow and the deep: long-range ecology movement. A summary”, *Inquiry* 16, 1973: 95–99.
- 27 P. Singer, *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals*, (New York: New York Review/Random House, 1975); T. Regan, T. *The Case for Animal Rights* (Routledge: London, 1984).
- 28 F. Zelko, “Challenging Modernity: The Origins of Postwar Environmental Protest in the United States” in *Shades of Green: Environmental Activism Around the Globe*, ed. Christof Mauch, Nathan Stoltzfus og Douglas Weiner (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006): 13-40.
- 29 J. Shantz, “Judi Bari and ‘the feminization of Earth First!’: The Convergence of Class, Gender, and Radical Environmentalism”, *Feminist Review* 70 (2002): 105-122.
- 30 Taylor, *Ecological Resistance*; R. Scarce, *Eco-Warriors: Understanding the Radical Environmental Movement* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2006); A. Nocella, “Unmasking the animal liberation front using critical pedagogy: Seeing the ALF for who they really are”, *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* 1 (2007): 1-10; Kahn, *Critical Pedagogy*.
- 31 D.R. Liddick, *Eco-Terrorism: Radical Environmental and Animal Liberation Movements* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2006).
- 32 L.J. Pickering, *The Earth Liberation Front: 1997–2002* (South Wales, NY: Arissa Publications, 2002): 58.
- 33 Taylor, *Ecological Resistance*; D. Bevington & C. Dixon, “Movement-relevant Theory: Rethinking Social Movement Scholarship and Activism”, *Social Movement Studies* 4, nr. 3 (2005): 185-208; Zelko, “Challenging Modernity”; Kahn, *Critical Pedagogy*.
- 34 H. Kopnina, “If a Tree Falls and Everybody Hears the Sound: Teaching deep ecology to business students”, *Journal of Education for Sustainable Development* 9, no. 1 (2015): 101–116; H. Kopnina, “Metaphors of Nature and Development: Reflection on the critical course of sustainable business”, *Environmental Education Research* 22, no. 4 (2015): 571-589.

perty damage to protest environmentally destructive corporate practices), and arrests of its members. The film focuses on Daniel McGowan, of the ELF members, examining the reasons behind his transformation from a “proper” business student to radicalization and arrest. The film directors also conduct interviews with the loggers, the FBI and police officers involved in tracking the activists, as well as with victims of property damage and arson attacks. The ideological presuppositions of both the ELF members, and the critique of the ELF are presented through interviews, revealing deep ecology and ecocentrism sympathies with the former group, and the accent on established rules and compliance to regulations with the latter group.

If a Tree Falls is an ultimate “anti-business” film as the ELF members conducted legal protests as well as acts of “illegal economic sabotage (the most dangerous but successful tactic against global giants such as Proctor & Gamble and ExxonMobil), engaging in tactics ranging from boycotting the GAP to breaking windows of McDonald’s franchises”.³⁵ This article serves as a follow-up on the previous study of the students’ perception of environmentalism.³⁶ It aims to complement scholarship of environmental education with an examination of a case study using critical pedagogy and ecopedagogy, developed by Paulo Freire, a renowned leftist educator who, who bridged the gap between revolutionary politics and education.³⁷ The reason why the film reflection assignment is discussed here is that it helps to develop a case for application of eco-pedagogy or critical pedagogy to move students towards (self)reflection without telling them anything, just exposing them to the film and asking them to individually reflect on it without any discussion. The researcher was interested in gauging the student opinions and perceptions to contemplate better strategies for discussing “ways forward” connected to ethics and sustainability in business education. The aim is both pedagogical and didactic – how to develop consequent courses in such a way that not only individual reflection but a dialogue, reflection, and setting out of a vision for the future” become possible, and theoretical/philosophical in a sense of examining and adding to Richard Kahn’s³⁸ the notion of *paideia* (discussed below).

The section below will briefly discuss the sub-field of environmental education, as recently, however, anti-environmentalism appeared from an unexpected source, namely not from the governments supporting the status quo, nor from corrupt local authorities or (illegal) loggers, but environmental education scholars. Following this will be the discussion of critical pedagogy and ecopedagogy education. While the ecopedagogy is seen as an outgrowth of the theory and practice of critical pedagogy, they are often presented in accord and deployed as synonyms, in contrast with conventional environmental education in as far as both points out that mainstream curriculum failed to engage with more

35 Nocella, “Unmasking”, 3.

36 H. Kopnina, “If a Tree Falls: Business students’ reflections on environmentalism”, *International Journal of Environment and Sustainable Development* 8, nr. 3 (2014): 311-329; Kopnina, “If a Tree Falls and Everybody Hears The Sound”.

37 Nocella, “Unmasking”.

38 Kahn, *Critical Pedagogy*.

radical and disruptive forms of social critique. This is especially true concerning environmental sustainability and ethically, to the treatment of nonhumans.³⁹ By contrast, critical ecopedagogy encourages a relationship with the Earth is founded on knowledge; physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. An argument will be developed that the label of radicalism or even terrorism attached to environmental activism precludes learning about the potentially transformative understanding of the root causes of environmental crises.

Mistrust of environmentalism in education

It has been noted that education, which normally reflects dominant societal norms and morals, has largely shied away from any forms of environmentalism that could be seen as controversial, with a recent turn away from the environment towards more socio-economic issues in education for sustainable development.⁴⁰ Environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs), 'activists', 'conservationists', transnational networks or grassroots protest movements are lumped together under the label of 'environmentalists'⁴¹ by some environmental education scholars. Arjan Wals and Bob Jickling have warned against authoritative or normative teaching for sustainability, which in extreme forms they see as a form of 'eco-totalitarianism'.⁴² In reflecting upon the controversy about shooting wolves in Canada's Yukon area, Jickling, who at that time was employed as a local schoolteacher, felt that advocating for the wolf protection would be "neither practically viable nor educationally justifiable".⁴³ Jickling explains this position not by the fact some parents of students in this community were hunters but by the need to stay neutral to teach students democratic and open values and avoid indoctrination. Jickling and Spork have also warned that any education *for* anything – even for sustainability – carries a danger of indoctrination. These scholars have warned that education *for* the environment can also become a universalizing discourse that seeks to marginalize other approaches.⁴⁴

In an article tellingly titled "Between knowing what is right and knowing that it is wrong to tell others what is right", Wals, while acknowledging the urgency of resolving environmental issues, notes a "conviction that it is wrong to persuade, influence or even educate

39 *Op. cit*

40 *Op. cit.*; H. Kopnina, "Education for Sustainable Development (ESD): The turn away from 'environment' in environmental education?", *Environmental Education Research* 18, nr. 5 (2012): 699-717; M. Bonnett, *Environmental Consciousness, Sustainability, and Transcendent Nature. Towards Ecologizing Education* (New York: Routledge, 2020 (forthcoming)).

41 Castells, *The Power Of Identity*; Kopnina, "Revisiting the Lorax Complex".

42 A.E.J. Wals and B. Jickling, "'Sustainability' in higher education: From doublethink and newspeak to critical thinking and meaningful learning", *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education* 3, nr. 3 (2002): 225.

43 B. Jickling, "Wolves, Ethics and Education: Looking at Ethics through the Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan" in *A Colloquium on Environment, Ethics, and Education*; Jickling, B., red. (Whitehorse, Canada: Yukon College, 1996): 158–163.

44 B. Jickling & H. Spork, "Education for the Environment: a critique", *Environmental Education Research* 4, nr. 3 (1998): 309-27.

people towards pre- and expert-determined ways of thinking and acting⁴⁵. To pluralize, democratize and ‘balance’ opposing perspectives, scholars proposing plural and open education propose that sustainability-related conflicts should not be dealt with in moral (good vs. bad) or rational (right vs. wrong) terms but as a broader exercise in social learning.⁴⁶ Instead of the supposedly “authoritative” education *for* the environment, some scholars have suggested that educators “should take the complexity and pluralism of environmental ethical issues and the variety of sub-positions... into consideration”.⁴⁷ Breiting has expressed concern with the students being used as “marionettes” of the environmentalists.⁴⁸ Such warnings can be indeed very helpful in opening avenues of further inquiry for those wishing to engage in discourse analysis to deconstruct and, hopefully, as Fien has emphasized, “reconstruct, education for and also in/through, with and about the environment”.⁴⁹ However, as Fien also stressed, such caution can also testify to perhaps ironically, the lack of reflexivity over the scholars’ ideology of education, as discussed in the sections below. As critical pedagogy and eco-pedagogy scholars have argued, the refusal to engage with urgent issues that need radical rethinking may lead to the maintenance of the status quo. The radical educational and political project derived from the work of Paulo Freire⁵⁰ disputes the idea that education *for* the environment should not be prescriptive.

Critical pedagogy

In *Critical Pedagogy, Ec literacy and Planetary Crisis: The Ecopedagogy Movement*, environmental education scholar Richard Kahn reflects:

“[...] more problematic still for educators is the burgeoning rise in social and ecological disasters that are resulting from the mixture of unsustainable economic exploitation of nature and environmentally unsound cultural practices...Such ecological issues, requiring critical knowledge of the dialectical relationship between mainstream lifestyle and the dominant social structure, require a much more radical and more complex form of ec literacy than is presently possessed by the population at large [...]”⁵¹

45 A.E.J. Wals, “Between knowing what is right and knowing that it is wrong to tell others what is right: On relativism, uncertainty, and democracy in environmental and sustainability education”, *Environmental Education Research* 16, no. 1 (2010): 150.

46 *Op. cit.*

47 D.O. Kronlid & J. Öhman, “An environmental ethical conceptual framework for research on sustainability and environmental education”, *Environmental Education Research* 19, no. 1 (2013): 34.

48 S. Breiting, “Issues for environmental education and ESD research development: Looking ahead from WEEC 2007 in Durban”, *Environmental Education Research* 15, no. 2 (2009):199–207.

49 J. Fien, *Teaching and learning for a sustainable future* (Paris: UNESCO, 2010). Available from: <http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/>.

50 P. Freire, *Pedagogy Of The Oppressed* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972).

51 Kahn, *Critical Pedagogy*, 6.

In arguing that environmental education seems “toothless” in addressing the controversial issues having to do with population growth and increase in unsustainable production and consumption, Kahn also points out that conventional curriculum fails to engage with courageous activism that fuels societal protests. The conditions of liberal education in a time of ecological crisis requires not just minor adjustments in the existing curriculum but challenging some basic presuppositions about what are the main aims of education (what do we want to educate students for?), requiring revision of the concepts of freedom and emancipation. Kahn’s discussion of the development of *paideia* (/paɪˈdeɪə/) is revealed to be problematically complicit with a Western legacy of domination based upon race, class, gender, and species. Since its birth in ancient Greece, Kahn explains, *paideia* referred to the rearing and education of the ideal citizens, this educational/political concept of playing a significant role during the history of Western development in helping to formulate the entirety of civic life. In this sense, *paideia* can be thought of as shaping the very definition of humanity and civilization, “moving the idea of education beyond simple military preparation and the tutored construction of aristocratic class consciousness into the domain of civic institutional interaction, where a complex of cultural skills and political literacies could be learned”.⁵² Despite the idea of being broadly shared and democratic, Kahn explains, Athenian *paideia* has “boiled down to an attempt to liberate culture from nature”⁵³ and led to a tradition of anthropocentric thought. In this way, it is interesting to see how the idea of democratic learning, openness or “pluralism” can still occur within the overarching domain of dominant (to the point of being invisible as it becomes and normative) anthropocentric assumptions about the world. By contrast, so-called “radical” groups (or potentially, educators who carry out their philosophy) try to reach beyond normative ethical assumptions. ELF and ALF attempt to “produce a revolutionary society based on critiques of the multiple fronts of systemic oppression”⁵⁴ as they move toward creating “interspecies alliance politics”.⁵⁵ Kahn argues that presently education fails to integrate such “radical” environmental movement, failing to engage with “a critical dialogue between social and eco-justice”.⁵⁶

The same thought inspired Michael Bonnett’s book *Environmental Consciousness, Sustainability, and Transcendent Nature: Towards Ecologizing Education* (forthcoming 2020). Bonnett argues that education should not be subservient to the largely economy-driven incentives of sustainable development, pleading for a more ecological vision of the world in which students become active citizens and defenders of the planet. This active citizenship requires an understanding of the power of established corporate and govern-

52 *Op. cit.*, 37.

53 *Op. cit.*, 45.

54 C. Rosebraugh, *Burning Rage of a Dying Planet: Speaking for the Earth Liberation Front* (New York: Lantern Press, 2004); Pickering, *The Earth Liberation Front*, quoted in Kahn, *Critical Pedagogy*, 126.

55 S. Best, *Common Natures, Shared Fates: Toward an Interspecies Alliance Politics* (Impact Press 2003), <http://www.impactpress.com/articles/decjan03/interspecies12103.html> quoted in Kahn, *Critical Pedagogy*, 126.

56 *Op. cit.*, 126.

ment hegemonies. Pluralism is still influenced by the dominant anthropocentric economic thinking.⁵⁷ As Anthony Nocella expresses it, “industries and the state have strong institutional and monetary biases” against justice for the environment.⁵⁸ In contrast to conventional education, critical pedagogy is a “radical education method and process for liberation”. Rather than being “marionettes of the environmentalists”,⁵⁹ without critical awareness, the students are more likely to be the marionettes of established economic interests.

“What better approach to fight and unveil the complex and interwoven lies of the global capitalist machine than one that fights for the oppressed, adopts a critical methodology, and promotes education as a non-violent form of radical social change.

In examining Freire’s seminal book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1997), one can understand the importance of striving for an engaging educational experience in the classroom or even learning about the revolutionary/liberation groups, societies, and collectives.”⁶⁰

Critical ecopedagogy raises several questions about education for sustainability, as well as ethical aspects of the treatment of environment and nonhumans such as animals. Critical Animal Pedagogy, for example, is predicated on the challenge of the examination and eradication of speciesist (discriminating against nonhuman species) pedagogies.⁶¹ Grubbs and Loadenthal note that academics who challenge the oppressive anthropocentric pedagogies are mapped within a spectrum of activists or even terrorists rather than “good scholars”, while, they argue, their challenge addresses the most hegemonic and oppressive power – that of government and corporate elites interested in maintaining the status quo at the cost of environment and nonhumans. As opposed to cautious anti-authoritarian, or anti-indoctrination approach, critical pedagogy addresses the urgency of environmental predicament. Wals and Jickling, despite their reluctance to resort to instrumentalism in teaching, also note unequal power between the “environment” itself and its human defenders and those in power.

Pragmatically and didactically, ecopedagogy can include situating local knowledge within the classroom through students’ exposure to social activism and action compe-

57 Kopnina, “Education”; H. Kopnina, “Circular economy and Cradle to Cradle in educational practice”, *Journal of Integrative Environmental Sciences* 15, nr. 1 (2018): 123-138; H. Kopnina, “Teaching Sustainable Development Goals in The Netherlands: a critical approach. Special Issue: Environmental and Sustainability Education in the BENELUX region”, *Environmental Education Research* 24, no. 9 (2018): 1268-1283; H. Kopnina, “Green-washing or best case practice? Using a circular economy and Cradle to Cradle case studies in educational practice”, *Journal of Cleaner Production* 219 (2019): 613-623; M.D. Sitka-Sage, H. Kopnina, S. Blenkinsop & L. Piersol, “Rewilding Education in Troubling Times; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Post-Nature”, *Visions for Sustainability* 8 (2017): 1-19.

58 Nocella, “Unmasking”, 3-4.

59 Breiting, “Issues”, 202.

60 Nocella, “Unmasking”, 4.

61 J. Grubbs & M. Loadenthal, “From the classroom to the slaughterhouse: Animal liberation by any means necessary”, *Counterpoints* 448 (2014): 179-201.

tences, helping to bridge the gap between academia and society.⁶² The case study below provides an opportunity to reflect on how students can be exposed to some social protest actions, and what lessons can be learned from it.

The case study: student assignments

Methodology

The study has been carried out as part of a required ethics and sustainability course given to business students, as indicated in the Introduction. The course was conducted by the author of this article based on some materials developed since the introduction of sustainability and ethics topics into the curriculum in 2007. There is a significant body of research on sustainability and ethics in higher education (*Environmental Education Research and Journal of Environmental Education* have been publishing on the sustainability curriculum since the nineteen seventies), and the emergence of scholarship on ethics in business education⁶³. However, most of the International Business programs at the universities in The Netherlands use ad hoc materials provided by the lecturers, as a survey of the Dutch programs demonstrates.⁶⁴

The objective of the course Business Ethics and Sustainability examined in this article was to teach students to recognize opportunities for innovation and impact at the intersection of ethics and environmental, economic and social systems. This course was aimed to develop critical thinking, strategic skills for more ethical and sustainable business, addressing the following:

1. The complex relationship between ethics and sustainability (e.g. What is the relationship between ethical issues having to do with, for example, poverty alleviation, human rights, and animal welfare? What are the differences between social, financial and environmental sustainability in business?)
2. Paradoxes of sustainable development and implications for doing 'ethical' and ecologically sustainable business.
3. Analysis of possibilities for absolute (probably impossible) and relative decoupling of resource consumption from economic growth and implications for international business. The final project will specifically focus on achieving (at least relative) decoupling through the circular economy.
4. Examples of radical/alternative visions
5. Ways forward and practice – Cradle to Cradle, circular economy...

62 Y.U. Mustafa, et al., "A Participatory Action Research Study of Nature Education in Nature: Towards Community-based Ecopedagogy", *International Journal of Progressive Education* 6 (2010): 3.

63 D. Gottardello & M.D.M. Pàmies, "Business School Professors' Perception of Ethics in Education in Europe", *Sustainability* 11, nr. 3 (2019): 608.

64 <https://www.educations.com/search/international-business-netherlands/c3984-d1009>

As part of the course, the students were involved in several activities that facilitated social learning,⁶⁵ including an in-class debate on the proposition “Economic growth, can be decoupled from natural resource consumption” and in-class discussions. This course integrated the viewing of and reflection on the film into one of the five assignments, related to point 5 above.

In 2017 there were 298 international business students (majority was Dutch, the rest European, Asian – predominantly Chinese, with roughly equal male/female ratio). The students were asked to write their reflection on the film, discussing both the events and ethical theory that they thought would be relevant for their understanding of the events. The ethical theory presented to students was derived from the book *Business Ethics: Managing corporate citizenship and sustainability in the age of globalization*,⁶⁶ including consequentialism and non-consequentialism, utilitarian, deontological, and virtue theory ethics in application to business and society at large. It is worth reflecting here that the textbook used did not explicitly relate to deep ecology, ecocentrism, or other environmental or animal ethics, however, within the context of critical pedagogy, the book provides significant reflections on deeper questions about the very possibility of conducting “ethical business”.

For anonymity purposes, the seven assignments were randomly selected of 298, no demographic identifying features were used. The seven assignments cited below were selected in the order they were submitted to the electronic drop-boxes. To secure anonymity, the extracts below contain no other identifying demographics (age, gender, nationality) information. The file identifying students is kept separately in a password protected folder by the researcher/lecturer. The extracts from student assignments below contain personal reflections and have maintained most of the original spelling, grammar, and style.

Student assignments

Student 1.

What I mainly learned from this documentary, is that America treats its forest as crops, ready for harvest. And that it is very hard to disagree with that same government, because the moment the public takes peaceful actions against the government, it answers with violence. It made me think about what is needed to have a say in what is happening to our environment? What do I need, being an average man, to raise my voice and let the government know that we need to protect our earth? Do I join protests, and risk being pepper-sprayed in my eyes until I surrender? Do I set a lumbermill on fire? Of course, I won't set a lumbermill on fire, but it makes you think about what is needed to make a difference.

This movie made me think of an ethical concept: Utilitarianism. Even though all the movements of ethics can be quite complicated to explain & put into practice, Utilitaria-

⁶⁵ Wals, “Between knowing”.

⁶⁶ A. Crane & D. Matten, *Business ethics: Managing corporate citizenship and sustainability in the age of globalization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016)

nism is mostly about how the outcome of our actions will judge how morally justifiable that action was. For instance, in the second world war, bombing Berlin did cause a lot of unnecessary deaths. However, it did make it easier to conquer Berlin and end a long and bloody war. When it comes to if a tree falls, it is important to look at the bigger picture. We do live in a world where mother nature is endangered, and at this speed, the governments of all countries won't make essential moves to stop endangering our nature. In practice, ELF did perform some radical actions, such as putting lumber mills to fire. It would mean a stop of deforestation, and a strong message to the Americans, which could result in putting a stop to massive deforestation. However, in that process, ELF accidentally put fire to an innocent lumbermill. That makes you think: Do the means justify the cause? That's what I didn't like, the innocent lumber mill that was targeted. However, I did like that there was an active voice reaching out to the world, saying "Hey, the government isn't going to listen to us when we are peaceful, so what options do are there?". It makes you think about what it takes to put a stop to the mutilation of mother earth. Because one day, there won't be enough trees on earth, there won't be enough water. It makes you realize that there is an active threat going on, but yet the entire world doesn't seem to realize how active this threat is, and how fast we are destroying the earth. I learned that sometimes when it comes to ethical issues, certain standards and values have to be pushed to reach a goal. Sometimes, when something very large is at stake (such as the earth), certain actions must be taken when no one else dares or is willing to listen. However, it must stay at pushing boundaries. It must not cause damage amongst innocent people, otherwise, it will look a lot like terrorism indeed. When it comes to convincing the rest of the world that serious action must be taken, I think this movie had an impact. However, a small one. I do believe that there is a majority of people that do recognize that serious action must be taken to preserve nature. Unfortunately, it is the big leaders, that need convincing and that need to undertake action. The world is filled with fools (like Donald Trump) that choose to ignore/deny the environmental issues, even though they are the ones that can make a change. And in my eyes, that is much more unethical than a couple of activists burning down a lumber mill that is active in massive deforestation.

Student 2.

What I had to discuss is the title 'terrorist' for several ELF members, because do crimes against property in which no is intended to be killed or injured constitute acts of terrorism? The US law defines; the term "international terrorism" means activities that: involve violent acts or acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or any State, or that would be a criminal violation if committed within the jurisdiction of the United States or any State.

But after saying this the law does state that; appear to be intended-- to intimidate or coerce a civilian population. This makes the actions of Mr. McGowan discussable, the actions were there to intimidate certain people but in an inappropriate an illegal way. The actions were not only there to intimidate but also to warn people that the attacked companies

were damaging the environment. The activities involve acts that were dangerous to human life but were planned so they couldn't harm anyone... and thus could be a non-terroristic activity. Eventually, the lawyer team of Mr. McGowan fought against the title as a terrorist but the US Law Court found McGowan guilty and [...] put him in a special highly secure prison for terrorists [...] I think he deserved a normal prison, he fought for nature, eventually stepped out of ELF because he thought some actions were too extreme. He earned prison times because these kinds of actions are unacceptable but a terrorist of the USA seems un-logical to me because he did it out of love for nature. A case of Meta-ethics.

Student 3.

The film also objectively demonstrated the authority attitude and their action. Here comes the heated argument about what criteria the legal system used to define is a terrorist? Do crimes destroy properties in such a carefully planned out way to make sure no one is killed or injured should be put as terrorist attract? Daniel McGowan was arrested in 2005 and sentenced to seven years at the federal penitentiary in Marion, Ill. The sentence came with a "terrorism enhancement" provision that allows a judge to apply a harsher standard if the crime fits the traditional concept of "terrorism".⁶⁷

Through my research, I found out ELF's ideology which they believe the only logical response is to remove the profit motive from killing the Earth an inhabitant. All actions were designed to maximize economic damage against entities profiting from environmental destruction.⁶⁸ This makes me associate the case with the famous event in American history, which was the Boston Tea Party at some level. Demonstrators fought against the law was called the Tea Act, they destroyed the entire ship of tea, which was sent from the East India Company and threw chests of tea into Boston Harbor. They were also used the extreme way which was destroying the entities who benefit and show no care to others. However, the crisis had such significant influence and it became a starting point of the American Revolution. Americans don't call themselves terrorists nowadays, and the Boston Tea Party has become such an iconic event that the Tea Party Movement in 2010 was using this name to demonstrate their ideology and spirit. Therefore, does this so-called "terrorism" is only become an action which you are fighting against the current authority.

I think consequentialism theory could justify ELF's ideology at some level. In an extreme form to explain the theory could be implied that if the goal is morally important enough, any method of achieving it is acceptable. At the end of the movie Daniel McGowan said he understands there is not just white and black in this world, there are also grey areas. This makes me think the economic growth and damage of the environment seems never going to be compatible. There are always compromises and sacrifices and grey area. Maybe what we need is some affirmative action that could eliminate the grey area.

67 S. Holden, "Crimes Against Property, as Protests", *New York Times*, 21. Juni, 2011.

68 C.J. Covill, "Greenpeace, Earth First! and The Earth Liberation Front: The Progression of the Radical Environmental Movement in America", 2008, Digital Commons.

Student 4.

What I liked the most about this documentary is that it didn't try to teach you how you should behave and how you could take action to improve the environment. It raises awareness about the situation we're in with the whole world, and it shows that it's very difficult to achieve and change something in battles that involve large companies that damage the environment. Secondly, it showed very well that going too far will lead to a situation where you might have to go to prison. And how the government and police are dealing with situations like this. Lastly, it shows [...] that the police is willing to do everything to create order through the use of violence.

Both sides believe that they were ethically correct because they think they serve the right cause. I do believe that the actions of E.L.F. were going too far at a certain point. But Daniel McGowan also claims that. In my opinion, he is the biggest winner, even though he has to go to prison. This because he was able to increase the awareness that had to be raised, he took action, and he was able that things were going too far. Whereas the government just thinks they're superior and they did the best thing ever, as well as the way they let the police just do whatever they want. I would highly recommend this documentary to everyone I know.

On the one hand, the environmentalists have a belief and vision. And at a certain moment, they decide to take serious action against lumber companies as well as multiple slaughterhouses. These environmentalists knew very well what they were doing. They wanted things to change and especially they wanted the environment to improve. The actions they took were very organized and only targeted at companies to raise awareness or to hurt them in such a way that this would lead to improvements regarding the way they'll treat the environment in the future. On the other hand, you have the government that believes that these environmentalists are bad people, and even call them terrorists. They damage business and their actions would lead to a situation where people are not feeling safe anymore because they think they'll be the next target. The only people who do look at consequences in this documentary are the environmentalists. In the first place, they only care about the planet and try to improve the current situation. This is so hard that they have to take these aggressive actions towards companies. However as Daniel mentions in the film, is that their actions were only focussed on property and estate. Not a single person was killed with their actions. So I believe that even though the government has a point with the fact that people are not allowed to do whatever they want. It goes too far treating these people as terrorists and locking them away for the rest of their lives.

Student 5.

This film captured the perspective of both sides which gives more validity to it. From showing how brutally the police force approached the protesters with pepper spray, beatings, manipulation, etc, at the beginning of ELF's existence, to the admission of the wrongful burning of property due to the members of the ELF receiving wrongful information. This film paints the situation as less black and white, but more shades of grey.

The director properly portrayed the characters and the events that occurred. It appears that the director wished to display the complexities that go into environmental activism and where the limits might be drawn. This all puts ethical issues and morality into perspective for me since we do have to think of who is more radical and how easy it is for individuals to become more radical when they feel oppressed. This film eloquently conveys an objective account of the ethical issues involved in this story. Additionally, requiring that the viewer examine their personal ethical and moral ideology when confronted with information from both sides.

The ethical issues faced in this film are exploitation of the environment, abuse of power by the government, police force and corporations, and environmental ethical issues such as biocentrism, conservation, the value of nature, the land ethic, obligations to future generations, and sustainable development.⁶⁹ Ethical theories that motivate the context of this film are consequentialist, given that the ELF members went against social morality to achieve what they considered to be a just cause.

Student 6.

There were several moral arguments. For starters, during the gross part of the documentary, I was in favor of Daniel and the ELF group. I didn't think that the punishment was in its place, because they didn't hurt people. I did agree with the fact that they should be punished, but not as hard as murderers or other criminals.

This view changed at the end of the movie. At 1:13:00, another moral argument occurred. The people who were attacked felt in danger, they didn't know that the ELF was not targeting them but their buildings to send a message. This changed my view of the movie and put me in favor of the judged call.

A beautiful example of the moral argument I was dealing with occurred at 1:19:30. The attorney said that at first, he thought they were very unlikable persons, but after digging into the case and getting to know these persons better, he asked himself: "Why are they doing these things?". This is precisely what the director wanted to get across, all the insights of the story and it told from both ways. Besides the fact that it was a thrilling story that had me from the beginning to the end, the open way of telling the story was also the thing I liked the most about the documentary. The documentary didn't choose a side, it let the audience pick a side for itself without influencing them too much.

I think this movie displays the ethical issues perfectly and it is an effective instrument to inform the broader public about the ethical issues involved in this documentary. I learned to not judge people too soon because you never know their story.

When looking at the ethical theory behind this documentary and applying that to the choices of the key players, one interesting thing stands out; Consequentialism. This ethical theory says that an act is only moral or ethical if it results in a good conclusion. During the

69 H. Kopnina & J. Blewitt, *Sustainable Business: Key issues* (New York: Routledge, 2014)

beginning of the documentary, the motives of ELF were based on, in their eyes, morally right and justifiable reasons. They were convinced that to save the environment, measures like these were right. Consequentialism is often described by the proverb; The end justifies the means. In this case, the end was to save the environment and the means were ‘terror’ attacks.

Student 7.

I believe that the moral of the story is to exploit corporations that in the eyes of the world (media) are focusing on good causes while offline they are taking advantage of our natural resources. Also, the film suggests that to get the attention of the corporations and explaining to them that what they are doing is wrong, isn't as effective as people think. This must do with the fact that most of these corporations understand how their operations are affecting the world. On the contrary, some of these corporations such as Mining and Fishing companies are researching ways to keep their private operations off the book.

In my opinion, Daniel and his group didn't do what was right but what was needed. Because in the same way, the media portrays their actions “illegal”, the media should portray the misconduct of the corporations illegal as well. But this isn't the case and therefore I believe that to fight fire with fire you need to bring fire as well. Meaning that for Daniel to receive the attention from the government and its law officials, Daniel needed to exploit the corporations in a way that will attract the media and this had a negative consequence for the group.

The first story the director shows already proves what kind of networking there is between corporations and law enforcement. Around 10 minutes and 54 seconds of the film, the director switches interviewee and interviews Tim Lewis which is an activist and filmmaker. Now Tim Lewis tells a true story from 1999 in Western Oregon. He mentioned that he didn't understand at first why they were sending Arsons to the neighborhoods. For the viewers to understand the incidents, he tells a story about another documentary called “Pick Axe” that focuses on the “hippy-type” protesting from 1995 versus “monkeywrenching”. Monkeywrenching is a term used to describe all the traps and actions the activists used against logging corporations to boycott the logging. Tim Lewis specifically introduced a very Important person in the film, Jake Ferguson, who is one of the first activists that took part in misconduct against law enforcement. This had to do with the fact that the corporation took advantage of the Forest Service and bought the land (Pick Axe – 1995) and therefore forced (arrested the ones that didn't want to leave in less than 5 minutes) the activist to leave the property immediately. This showed the activists that having a good cause isn't only going to get you far in the world we live in. This also showed that people will do everything they can to protect their business and/or clients. This in my opinion already shows what kind of people/business you can find in the business world and sometimes you need to play hard to stay relevant. That's exactly what Jake Ferguson did and took matters into his own hands. Together with other members of his group, they went and lit a Ranger Station (Oakridge) on fire. This incident became one of the first severe action against log-

ging companies. This incident served as a message to the companies to try and stop the logging. This also inspired a lot of young activists to support the arsons and the actions the group was taking. But some of the environmentalists disagree with these actions and argued that in democracy, public protesting is the best way to bring change.

Roderick M. Hills argues that in authoritarian regimes, “the Street” is a substitute for elections... Compared to environmental protests, public protest is very effective since the corporations can’t go against human rights. Also, public protest not only gives the public opinion, but it also shows the number of participants that could be gathered to fight a specific cause. In this documentary, the director uses past incidents to show that the situation hasn’t changed even though the media portray so. This injustice is what the protesters are fighting for because the distribution of power and the decision-making process goes through the corporations. Thus, I believe that protesting always shows the power of people regardless of what they are protesting for. Therefore, in this case, some of the environmentalists and activists went a bit too far within reason, because the corporations still take advantage of our natural resources.

Analysis

The student assignments testify to the complexity of issues concerning ethics and sustainability. The students’ assignments demonstrate the understanding of the ethical complexity of the motivation behind one particular protest movement. While students’ understanding is embedded in concrete time and place, the wider moral implications of labels such as “radicalism”, and the power of the state are questioned in the sample of assignments. A few students have noted that the American government uses the monopoly on violence indisputable ways, with student 1 noting “the moment the public takes peaceful actions against the government, it answers with violence”. Student 2 thought that McGowan deserves to go to a regular, not high security, prison. The government was also seen as a self-justifying impudent agent by student 4: “the government just thinks they’re superior and they did the best thing ever, as well as the way they let the police just do whatever they want”. Student 4 also noted, “the police are willing to do everything to create order through the use of violence”. Most students thought that the American government has misused the monopoly on violence. None of the students reported being aware of the global threats to environmentalists, not just in America, as discussed in the Introduction.

The question of individual responsibility has been raised by student 1: “what is needed to have a say in what is happening to our environment?”. The same student reflected on personal learning: “I learned that sometimes when it comes to ethical issues, certain standards and values have to be pushed to reach a goal”. Student 6 reflected: “I learned to not judge people too soon”.

As far as ethical theories are concerned, student 1 reflected on utilitarianism: “mostly about how the outcome of our actions will judge how morally justifiable that action was”. Utilitarianism was also used in a different meaning –that of instrumentalism - with student

1 noting the utilitarian use of nature by the American government treating “forest as crops, ready for harvest”.

One of the key questions the students asked was: “Do the means justify the cause?” Some students have noticed that environmental damage; love of nature, and care about sustainable future motivated the activists. As student 2 reflected, intention does matter as “the actions were not only there to intimidate but also to warn people that the attacked companies were damaging the environment”. The same considered what constitutes the act of terrorism in American law and reflected that the label of a terrorist “seems un-logical to me because he did it out of love for nature”. It is significant in terms of ethical relativity to note how motivation (“love”) is seen as a partial justification for the action. Student 7 has reflected that “to get the attention of the corporations and explaining to them that what they are doing is wrong, isn’t as effective as people think” – thus ELF actions could be seen as utilitarian in a sense of being more effective.

Student 6 has evoked consequentialism, defined as “ethical theory says that an act is only moral or ethical if it results in a good conclusion”. Student 2 used the term “meta-ethics” to explain why McGowan “clearly earned prison times because these kinds of actions are unacceptable” but disagreed with the label of terrorist. Realizing that ethics is relative, student 3 wrote: “There are always compromises and sacrifices and grey area”. Similarly, student 5 wrote, the “situation described in the film is less black and white, but more shades of grey”.

The students noticed a thorny issue of ethics and legality, as well as imbalance in power in assigning what is “right” or “legal”. Student 7 reflected that while the media portrays the ELF’s actions as “illegal”, they “should portray the misconduct of the corporations illegal as well”. According to student 7, there is also a difference between what is ‘right’ (from the government point of view) and what is necessary (“Daniel and his group didn’t do what was right but what was needed”).

Student 3 reflected on learning about the paradoxes of today’s reality, with the current government and media focused on economic growth “as a good thing”, while “the economic growth and damage of the environment seem never going to be compatible”. This has important connotations in the context of global environmental protests outlined at the beginning of this article. Many “radical” activists perhaps being labeled so precisely because of their opposition to the hegemonic assumption that economic growth – even if it results in such “side effects” as logging, pollution, or climate change – is “good”. Student 7 also reflected that it is not just the government and police but corporations that hold the reins as “the distribution of power and the decision-making process goes through the corporations”. Student 7 also wondered whether in modern democracies we should accept the non-radical means of achieving change, noting, “some of the environmentalists disagree with these actions and argued that in democracy, public protesting is the best way to bring change”.

Discussion: lessons learned

So, what lessons can be learned from critical pedagogy about radical activism? In the words of Nocella:

“It cannot be stressed enough that the Green Scare is being led not only by law enforcement agencies such as the FBI but ultimately by corporations who are fearful of what these activists will convey to the public about their destruction... The Earth and animal liberationists are not going after people or the government, but rather they are going after the new super-power, the global capitalist market... It is here that the FBI are mere street-line bureaucrats carrying out the job assigned to them by the U.S. Congress and their corporate paymasters.”⁷⁰

Noting that “industries and the state have strong institutional and monetary biases” against justice for the environment animals, Nocella is fearful “that no amount of debate or education is likely to change”.⁷¹ Yet, looking at the assignments above, it is hopeful to see that business (!) students from this random sample seem to get the point. The case study of student assignments provides an opportunity to both reflect on how students were exposed to radical environmentalism without “indoctrination” as they were asked to watch the documentary without the lecturer’s comments, only having been exposed to general ethical theories. As Nocella recommends, this experience helps the “teacher” to “step out of an authoritarian position, while holding onto a leadership role as a facilitator and facilitate a process of engaging social ideology and experience”.⁷² The critical pedagogy seeks ways for the “teacher” – in this case, the film about radical environmentalists – can help students to develop their critical judgment. The next step in this process is offering students more discussions as well as practical exercises as to how to conduct business – or indeed their own lives – in such a way that some of the issues discussed in their assignments become part of their engaged citizenship. As one student has reflected, “Sometimes, when something very large is at stake (such as the earth), certain actions must be taken when no one else dares or is willing to listen.” Rather than being “indoctrinated” by the generalized group of “environmentalists”, the exercise showed that the students were able to apply critical thinking to their understanding of action or inaction, and broader issues of citizenship freedom, human rights, and legitimacy.

It needs to be acknowledged though that pluralistic approach proposed by Wals, and the conception of education (vs. training), proposed by Jickling, is hardly instances of anti-environmentalism. These scholars do present a much-needed reservation in the teacher engagement, with a more neutral or impartial stance calling for the manifold of perspectives among the students. In his earlier article, “Why I don’t want my children to be

70 Nocella, “Unmasking”, 3.

71 *Op. cit.*

72 *Op. cit.*, 4.

educated for sustainable development”, Jickling helpfully warned educators not to blindly address what is seen as normatively “good”.⁷³ When applied to education, a critique of the paradoxes in sustainable development has led scholars such as Jickling to warn educators about education for sustainable development and other hegemonies. In some way(s?), Breiting’s approach is congenial with an ideological-critical perspective and in this way not that far removed from critical pedagogy.⁷⁴ Democratic and plural learning enables educators, researchers, and students to attend to the many languages and discourses.⁷⁵ Pluralism is beneficial to active citizenship and can equip students to become active agents of sustainability, allowing one – including the lecturers - to see the limitations of one’s mindset and to reflect on one’s ideological conditioning.⁷⁶

However, in the plural and open perspectives, there is also a danger that each advocate has his or her vision or “different pedagogical “chapels,” all distinct proponents of the right approach, the best program, the appropriate method.⁷⁷ In the post-truth world, opinions risk becoming facts, but dominant hegemonies, such as those that support the neoliberal economy, making students “professionals” in a high-demand consumer society, with decision-making still dominated by one species and thus highly anthropocentric,⁷⁸ become masked by plurality – which is limited to one single species.⁷⁹ In education, encapsulated by social norms and wide acceptance, dominant types of ‘pluralism’ might become the tyranny of the majority – especially in cases where “voices” of nonhuman species or trees that Daniel McGowan defends, are represented by too few marginalized or all-too-careful and politically correct teachers. In this sense, Kahn’s discussion of paideia as a normative force that allows for some dissent, but within pre-defined parameters (an e.g. plurality of opinion within an anthropocentric paradigm) continues to exercise its hegemony. Jickling and Spork’s⁸⁰ and Breiting’s⁸¹ the concern with indoctrination seems to under-estimate the power of the dominant education, that marginalizes land ethics,⁸² deep ecology and ecocentrism,⁸³ animal rights and welfare movements⁸⁴ as one of many plural voices – rather than unique human voices that represent billions of nonhuman beings. As Fien has stated,

73 B. Jickling, “Why I don’t want my children to be educated for sustainable development: Sustainable belief”, *The Trumpeter* 11, nr. 3 (1994):2–8.

74 Breiting, “Issues”.

75 T. Berryman & L. Sauv , “Languages and discourses of education, environment, and sustainable development. *International Handbook of Research on Environmental Education*”, ed. Robert B. Stevenson, Michael Brody, Justin Dillon & Arjen E.J. Wals: 133-147.

76 H. Kopnina, “Metaphors”.

77 L. Sauv , “Currents in environmental education: Mapping a complex and evolving pedagogical field”, *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education* 10, no. 1 (2005): 11.

78 Kopnina, “Education”.

79 H. Kopnina & B. Cherniak, “Neoliberalism and Justice in Education for Sustainable Development: A call for inclusive pluralism”, *Environmental Education Research* 22, no. 6 (2016): 827-841.

80 Jickling & Spork, “Education”.

81 Breiting, “Issues”.

82 Leopold, “Sand County almanac”

83 Naess, “The shallow”.

84 Singer, *Animal Liberation*; Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights*.

the “critical pedagogy of education for the environment provides a professionally-ethical way of teaching which contrasts with the allegations of indoctrination in the critique”.⁸⁵

While showing this documentary to students is but the first step to recognition of the non-anthropocentric thinking, support of ecodeмокracy⁸⁶ and inclusive pluralism,⁸⁷ the next step is perhaps much more ‘radical’. In recognition of the human sacrifice for the sake of nonhuman nature, but more significantly, through understanding that “pluralism”, is represented by more than a single species as it happens to be the case with conventional EE/ESD, needs to proportionately include the human “proxies” for *billions* of nonhuman beings that cannot speak our language.⁸⁸ These proxies, and in the case of education, teachers representing nonhuman voices, need to be not just one small group, but a majority. For example, if a 1-hectare forest was scheduled to be felled, at a density of over 50,000 individuals per square meter,⁸⁹ there would be more than 500 billion individuals at risk. Thus, one single human proxy – or lecturer - will be representing all of them. This is a far cry from the type of pluralism currently advocated in environmental education literature. In this sense, a well-known environmental education scholar and practitioner Jickling, who refuses to take a stance for the wolves, and yet speaks of the need for plural perspectives, remains within the domain of the oppressive hegemonic paideia. In this sense, ecocentric or animal rights/welfare supporting teachers will not be recognized as just one of many plural voices, but as central to educating responsible planetary citizens.

Whether just viewing and reflecting on one documentary film will help these students to become responsible planetary citizens, and to critically evaluate their business education, will be only clear after many years. Further, in drawing lessons from the film that makes students think about the label of radicalism or even terrorism attached to some forms environmental activism reveals deeper societal issues having to do with hidden or overt government or corporate hegemonies. While ecopedagogy reveals that the label of “radicalism” precludes public understanding about potentially transformative solutions to environmental crises, which have to do with a critique of who owns the monopoly of power and how publically engaged students can be empowered to be planetary citizens. The film reflection assignments above demonstrate promise in how ecological citizenship and critical thinking can be developed not just in “converted” audiences of environmental activists but among business students.

85 Fien, *Teaching and Learning*, 179.

86 J. Gray and P. Curry, “Ecodeмокracy and Political Representation for Non-human Nature” in Kopnina, H., and Washington, H. (red.), *Conservation: Integrating Social and Ecological Justice* (Dordrecht: Springer, New York, 2019): 155-166.

87 Kopnina & Cherniak, “Neoliberalism”.

88 Gray & Curry, “Ecodeмокracy”.

89 A. Fjellberg, P.H. Nygaard & O.E. Stabbetorp, “Structural changes in Collembola populations following replanting of birch forest with spruce in North Norway” i G. Halldorsson, E.S. Oddsdottir & O Eggertsson (red.), *Proceedings from the AFFORNORD Conference*: 119–25.

Returning to the idea of *paideia*,⁹⁰ in the spirit of lecturer-researcher self-reflection, it needs to be noted that the university context lays constraints that complicate the employment of ecopedagogy within the context of business education. The activist or “radical” environmentalist views are either marginalized or become presented as indoctrinating. In a more open political arena, the recent rise of the Dutch politician Thierry Baudet, who denies climate change, universities and schools were openly accused of indoctrinating students in “leftist” causes such as the environment.⁹¹ Somehow, extreme caution about indoctrination, as discussed by scholars defending pluralism, as well as in this researcher’s educational practice, is often stressed the case of environmentalism, but not in cases when values such as human rights, or rejection of beliefs resulting in sexism, racism, etc. are taught. In fact, drawing from this researcher/ lecturer’s own experience in working with other colleagues involved in the course, the “enlightened” social and economic values (for example, the importance of addressing business responsibility in economic equality) are presented as normative (and in fact, there are many examples when teachers blamed for sexism or racism were fired), while speciesism is seen as less of an issue. The film reflection was one of the rare instances when the topics of corporate compliance and governance, as well as ethical discussion of poverty, inequality, and unequal pay, gave way to exposure to a more ecocentric perspective.

Conclusions

Environmentalism and environmental activism have many different faces, including radicalism and terrorism, depending on how the group or individuals are defined in a specific national or international context. This article has started with the exploration of the types of environmentalists that suffered persecution at the hands of those whose interests they oppose. This article also discussed skepticism in environmental education scholarship about more ‘activist’ forms of teacher’s engagement with the subject of sustainability or ethical issues such as animal rights. As discussed here, the field of critical pedagogy and ecopedagogy recommends engagement with activism and critical examination of what makes some types of “environmentalism” to be labeled as radical. Such examination exposes entrenched political and corporate power hierarchies. It has been argued that exposing students to (radical) activism – in this case, simply asking them to comment on a documentary film about the Earth Liberation Front, helps to develop the students’ critical thinking. As one of the students reflected, “Besides the fact that it was a thrilling story”, a story of the ELF helped to develop students’ ability to understand the challenge of responsible and informed citizenship.

90 Kahn, *Critical Pedagogy*.

91 HOP, “Baudet: ‘We’re being undermined by our universities’”, 2018, <https://www.dub.uu.nl/en/news/baudet-%E2%80%98we%E2%80%99re-being-undermined-our-universities%E2%80%99>

References

- Amnesty International. 2018. Poland: arrests and refusal of entry to environmentalists during the cop24 climate talks. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur37/9550/2018/en/>
- Best, S. 2003. *Common Natures, Shared Fates: Toward an Interspecies Alliance Politics*. Impact Press. <http://www.impactpress.com/articles/decjan03/interspecies12103.html>
- Bevington, D. and Dixon, C. 2005. Movement-relevant Theory: Rethinking Social Movement Scholarship and Activism. *Social Movement Studies*, 4 (3): 185-208.
- Blet, R. 2018. Five Asian environmental activists killed for defending the land and natural resources against exploitation. *South China Morning Post*. <https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/article/2156958/five-egregious-deaths-asian-environmental-activists-killed-defending-land>
- Bonnett, M. 2020. *Environmental Consciousness, Sustainability, and Transcendent Nature. Towards Ecologizing Education*. New York: Routledge.
- Breiting, S. 2009. Issues for environmental education and ESD research development: Looking ahead from WEEC 2007 in Durban. *Environmental Education Research* 15(2):199–207.
- Burke, J. 2018. Six Virunga park rangers killed in DRC wildlife sanctuary. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/weather/2018/apr/09/six-virunga-park-rangers-killed-in-drc-wildlife-sanctuary>
- Baletti, B., Johnson, T., & Wolford, W. 2008. "Late mobilization": transnational peasant networks and grassroots organizing in Brazil and South Africa. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 8: 290–314.
- BBC. 2013. Turkey protests: 'It's a fight for freedom' <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-22753761>
- Berry, W. 1999. In distrust of movements. *The Land Report*, 65:3-7.
- Berryman, T. and Sauvé, L. 2013. Languages and discourses of education, environment, and sustainable development. *International Handbook of Research on Environmental Education*, edited by Robert B. Stevenson, Michael Brody, Justin Dillon, Arjen E.J. Wals. Pp. 133-147.
- Castells, M. 1997. *The Power of Identity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Clark, B. 2002. The Indigenous Environmental Movement in the United States: Transcending Borders in Struggles Against Mining, Manufacturing, and the Capitalist State. *Organization & Environment* 15 (4): 410-442.
- Collinson, H. 1996. *Green Guerrillas: environmental conflicts and initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Latin America Bureau, Ltd.
- Crane, A. and Matten, D. 2016. *Business ethics: Managing corporate citizenship and sustainability in the age of globalization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Covill, C.J. 2008. "Greenpeace, Earth First! and The Earth Liberation Front: The Progression of the Radical Environmental Movement in America", Digital Commons.
- Cox, R. New data reveals 197 land and environmental defenders murdered in 2017. Global Witness blog. <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/blog/new-data-reveals-197-land-and-environmental-defenders-murdered-2017/>
- Dryzek, J.S. 2005. *The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses*. Second Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fien J. 2010. Teaching and learning for a sustainable future Paris: UNESCO. Available from: <http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/>
- Fjellberg, A., Nygaard, P.H. and Stabbetorp, O.E. 2005. Structural changes in Collembola populations following replanting of birch forest with spruce in North Norway. In: Halldorsson G, Oddsdottir ES, and Eggertsson O, eds. *Proceedings from the AFFORNORD Conference*: 119–25
- Freire, P.1972. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Herder & Herder.
- Gayle, D. 2019. Shami Chakrabarti warns police over Extinction Rebellion prosecutions. *The Guardian*. May 25. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/may/25/shami-chakrabarti-warns-police-over-extinction-rebellion-prosecutions>

- Gibbens, S. 2019. 15 ways the Trump administration has changed environmental policies. National Geographic. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2019/02/15-ways-trump-administration-impacted-environment/>
- Global Conservation. 2018. Over one thousand park rangers die in 10 years <http://globalconservation.org/news/over-one-thousand-park-rangers-die-10-years-protecting-our-parks/>
- Global Witness. 2017. Defenders of the earth. <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/defenders-earth/>
- Gottardello, D. and Pàmies, M.D.M. 2019. Business School Professors' Perception of Ethics in Education in Europe. *Sustainability*, 11(3):608.
- Gottlieb, R. 2005. Preface, Introduction to the Revised Edition. In *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement*. Revised and Updated Edition, xiii-40, 389-414. Washington D.C.: Island Press.
- Gray, J. and Curry, P. 2019. Ecodemocracy and Political Representation for Non-human Nature. In Kopnina, H., and Washington, H. (eds) *Conservation: Integrating Social and Ecological Justice*. Dordrecht: Springer, New York. Pp. 155-166.
- Grubbs, J. and Loadenthal, M. 2014. From the classroom to the slaughterhouse: Animal liberation by any means necessary. *Counterpoints*, 448, pp.179-201.
- Guha, R. 2000. *Environmentalism: Global History*. New York: Longman.
- Holden, S. 2011. Crimes Against Property, as Protests. *New York Times*, 21. June.
- Holmes, G. 2016. Environmental activist murders set a record as 2015 became the deadliest year. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/jun/20/environmental-activist-murders-global-witness-report>
- HOP. 2018. Baudet: 'We're being undermined by our universities' <https://www.dub.uu.nl/en/news/baudet-%E2%80%98we%E2%80%99re-being-undermined-our-universities%E2%80%99>
- Jickling, B. 1994. Why I don't want my children to be educated for sustainable development: Sustainable belief. *The Trumpeter*, 11 (3):2-8.
- Jickling, B. 1996. Wolves, Ethics and Education: Looking at Ethics through the Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan. In *A Colloquium on Environment, Ethics and Education*; Jickling, B., Ed.; Yukon College: Whitehorse, Canada, pp. 158-163.
- Jickling, B. and Spork, H. 1998. Education for the Environment: a critique. *Environmental Education Research* 4(3): 309-327.
- Kahn, R. 2010. *Critical Pedagogy, Ecoliteracy, and Planetary Crisis: The Ecopedagogy Movement*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Kopnina, H. 2012. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD): The turn away from 'environment' in environmental education? *Environmental Education Research*, 18 (5): 699-717.
- Kopnina, H. 2014. If a Tree Falls: Business students' reflections on environmentalism. *International Journal of Environment and Sustainable Development*, 8(3): 311-329.
- Kopnina, H. 2015a. Revisiting the Lorax complex: Deep ecology and biophilia in a cross-cultural perspective. *Environmental Sociology*, 43(4): 315-324.
- Kopnina, H. 2015b. If a Tree Falls and Everybody Hears the Sound: Teaching deep ecology to business students'. *Journal of Education for Sustainable Development*, 9(1): 101-116.
- Kopnina, H. 2015c. 'Metaphors of Nature and Development: Reflection on the critical course of sustainable business'. *Environmental Education Research*, 22(4): 571-589.
- Kopnina, H. 2018a. Circular economy and Cradle to Cradle in educational practice. *Journal of Integrative Environmental Sciences*, 15(1): 123-138.

- Kopnina, H. 2018b. Teaching Sustainable Development Goals in The Netherlands: a critical approach. Special Issue: Environmental and Sustainability Education in the BENELUX region'. *Environmental Education Research*, 24(9): 1268-1283.
- Kopnina, H. 2019. Green-washing or best case practice? Using a circular economy and Cradle to Cradle case studies in educational practice. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 219:613-623.
- Kopnina, H. and Blewitt, J. 2014. *Sustainable Business: Key issues*. Routledge, New York.
- Kopnina, H. and Cherniak, B. 2016. 'Neoliberalism and Justice in Education for Sustainable Development: A call for inclusive pluralism'. *Environmental Education Research*, 22(6): 827-841.
- Kyte, B. 2017. Defenders of the Earth. Global Witness. <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/defenders-earth/>
- Kronlid, D. O. and Öhman, J. 2013. An environmental ethical conceptual framework for research on sustainability and environmental education, *Environmental Education Research*, 19(1): 21-44.
- Leopold, A. 1949/1987. *A Sand County almanac and sketches here and there*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Lewis, T.L. 2009. Environmental Movements in the Global South. In *Twenty Lessons in Environmental Sociology*, eds. K. Gould and T. Lewis, 244-254. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Liddick, D.R. 2006. *Eco-Terrorism: Radical Environmental and Animal Liberation Movements*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- Lobanov, V. 2018. Leading Environmentalists Violently Attacked in Russia <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/12/leading-environmentalists-violently-attacked-russia>
- Mallory, C. 2006. Ecofeminism and Forest Defense in Cascadia: Gender, Theory and Radical Activism. *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 17 (1): 32-49.
- Mercier, J. 1997. Downstream and upstream ecologists. The people, organizations, and ideas behind the movement. Westport (Connecticut): Praeger.
- Mustafa, Y.U. et al. 2010. A Participatory Action Research Study of Nature Education in Nature: Towards Community-based Ecopedagogy. *International Journal of Progressive Education*. 6:3.
- Naess, A. 1973. The shallow and the deep: long-range ecology movement. A summary. *Inquiry* 16:95-99.
- Nixon, R. 1996. Pipe dreams: Ken Saro-Wiwa, environmental justice, and micro-minority rights. *Black Renaissance*, 1(1):39.
- Nocella, A. 2007. Unmasking the animal liberation front using critical pedagogy: Seeing the ALF for who they really are. *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, 1:1-10.
- Pickering, L.J. 2002. *The Earth Liberation Front: 1997-2002*. South Wales, NY: Arissa Publications.
- Regan, T. 1984. *The Case for Animal Rights*. Routledge: London.
- Rosebraugh, C. 2004. *Burning Rage of a Dying Planet: Speaking for the Earth Liberation Front*. New York: Lantern Press.
- Sauvé, L. 2005. Currents in environmental education: Mapping a complex and evolving pedagogical field. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, 10 (1): 11-37.
- Scarce, R. 2006. *Eco-Warriors: Understanding the Radical Environmental Movement*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press
- Shantz, J. 2002. Judi Bari and 'the feminization of Earth First!': The Convergence of Class, Gender, and Radical Environmentalism. *Feminist Review* 70: 105-122.
- Singer, P. 1975. *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals*. New York: New York Review/Random House.
- Sitka-Sage, M.D., Kopnina, H. Blenkinsop, S. and Piersol, L. 2017. Rewilding Education in Troubling Times; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Post-Nature'. *Visions for Sustainability*. 8:1-19.
- Taylor, B.R. 1995. *Ecological Resistance Movements: The global emergence of radical and popular environmentalism*. SUNY Press.

- Van Gelder, S. ed. 2011. *This Changes Everything: Occupy Wall Street and the 99% Movement*. San Francisco: Berret-Koehler Publishers.
- Wolford, W. 2010. *This Land is Ours Now: Social Mobilization and the Meanings of Land in Brazil*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Wals, A.E.J. and Jickling, B. 2002. "Sustainability" in higher education: From doublethink and newspeak to critical thinking and meaningful learning, *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 3(3): 221 – 232.
- Wals, A.E.J. 2010. Between knowing what is right and knowing that it is wrong to tell others what is right: On relativism, uncertainty, and democracy in environmental and sustainability education. *Environmental Education Research*, 16 (1): 143–51.
- Watts, J. 2016. Berta Cáceres, Honduran human rights and environment activist, murdered. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/03/honduras-berta-caceres-murder-environment-activist-human-rights>
- Youkee, M. 2018. Indigenous Chileans defend their land against loggers with radical tactics. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/14/chile-mapuche-indigenous-arson-radical-environmental-protest>
- Zelko, F. 2006. Challenging Modernity: The Origins of Postwar Environmental Protest in the United States. In *Shades of Green: Environmental Activism Around the Globe*, eds. Christof Mauch, Nathan Stoltzfus, and Douglas Weiner, 13-40. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.