There are growing tensions within and between environmental groups all over the world over the extent to which they should align themselves with governments and private firms. The Hong Kong based Friends of the Earth group recently withdrew from the Friends of the Earth International after disputes over corporate sponsorship. In the US, disagreements emerged over Earth Day 1990 when some environmentalists claimed it had been taken over by corporate and government interests who were using their wealth and power to dominate the agenda and message of Earth Day. In Europe the Greens are torn with internal strife over strategies and philosophies. In Australia the decision by two of the major environmental groups, the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) and The Wilderness Society (TWS), to endorse the Labour Party in past elections was criticised within the environmental movement. Less contentious but still a matter of some controversy since the Government's commitment to Resource Security Legislation has been the involvement of environmental groups in the Government's "Ecologically Sustainable Development" working groups.

In each of these situations environmentalists have argued over campaign strategies which involve becoming aligned in some way with the existing power structure in order to influence decision-making from within. This paper will examine the inability of environmentalists to agree on these issues and especially their inability to "agree to differ". It will look at the strategies available to environmentalists, the shortcomings of each, and the way ideology plays a large part in choice of strategy.

The Green Spectrum

The common way of characterising differences within the environmental movement is as a continuous spectrum from light to dark green. In this paper I argue that if there is a spectrum, it is discontinuous; the point of discontinuity being marked by a paradigm shift. If this discontinuity exists, the splits occurring within the environment movement are to to be expected given the incompatible goals and assumptions associated with two very different paradigms.

Stephen Cotgrove has characterised two different paradigms and named those who subscribe to them as catastrophists and cornucopians. Cornucopians subscribe to the dominant social paradigm. At the heart of this paradigm are material values, including the goal of economic growth. Within this paradigm the environment is valued as a resource. The alternative paradigm is based on non-material values and those who subscribe to it believe that the natural environment has an intrinsic worth. Other writers have also characterised differing paradigms. Timothy O'Riordan has described those who accept the status quo of political and economic power as technocentric and those environmentalists who want to see that status quo changed as ecocentrics.

Both writers see their spectrum as applying within the environmental movement as well as to the wider society. Cotgrove separates environmentalists by referring to nature conservationists (who are aligned with the dominant social paradigms) and environmentalists (who are those subscribing to the alternative paradigm.) Both writers choose to portray the similarities of those at the dark green end of the spectrum rather than the differences and indicate a single alternative paradigm. However deep ecologists, social ecologists and ecofeminists and various others at the dark green end of the spectrum envisage quite different futures. The spectrum from light green to dark green could be more realistically seen as follows:

Light green environmentalists have a whole range of environmental strategies available to them from activism to negotiation. However, in practice for groups which want a good ongoing working relationship with policy makers to facilitate negotiation, activism becomes less of an option because it involves confrontation which does not sit well with the mutual trust required for that relationship to work. Similarly, the power of groups who negotiate with governments depend on their ability to influence voters and this requires respectability and moderateness which many types of activism destroy.

On the other hand dark green environmentalists are more willing to confront corporate and bureaucratic power and unwilling to refrain from activism in order to foster the relations necessary for negotiation.
Moreover they are generally ideologically opposed to negotiation and the compromises that it involves and unlikely to be able to conduct successful negotiations because of the lack of shared goals and assumptions between them and the policy-makers.

Activism

Protest action such as demonstrations, blockades, pickets, protest marches and meetings are the traditional method for groups of people to get their message across to the wider public. It is used as "a method for involving people in a meaningful experience in challenging unjust laws or actions; a way of demonstrating to others the depth of commitment felt by a group about an issue; a means to obtain publicity and apply pressure on politicians."[9]

Greenpeace use actions or stunts such as blocking pipes as a means of gaining publicity. Such actions tend to be symbolic and theatrical, aiming at the television cameras rather than any real disruption. The aim is to raise public awareness about a particular environmental issue by focussing on the worst examples of it. Because of the nature of the media, it does little more than this. The details and information that accompany the reporting of such an action tend to be simplified and scarce. The message that television viewers get is something like "this company is polluting the environment illegally and the government is doing nothing about it." It doesn't require any depth of understanding of issues to perform an action or to get the message from the television set but it is highly effective at drawing attention to an environmental problem and promoting public discussion of it.

In its extreme form activism includes "ecotage" and "monkey wrenching" which involves the destruction or disabling of machinery and property. Such actions are generally condemned by mainstream environmental groups but are used by groups such as Earth First! in the United States to hinder and disrupt environmentally destructive activities and to make them expensive. Christopher Manes, a member of that group, believes "property damage in defence of the environment is a justifiable, even potentially heroic action."[10] He argues such actions follow from a deep ecologist viewpoint.

If our selves belong to a larger self that encompasses the whole biological community in which we dwell, then an attack on the trees, the wolves, the rivers, is an attack upon all of us. Defense of place becomes a form of self-defense, which in most ethical and legal systems would be ample grounds for spiking a tree or ruining a tire.[11] For most environmental groups non-violent civil disobedience is preferred. Such disobedience is used by a range of groups from the most conservative resident action groups who are protesting about a development in their neighbourhood and for a range of purposes. Brian Martin points out that the blockades by TWS in Tasmania were mainly used to gain publicity and apply pressure on national politicians rather than a "grassroots" approach aimed at mobilising "ordinary people" to promote social change by changing their behaviour.[12] Similarly Greenpeace actions such as pipe blocking have been viewed as being aimed at raising funds rather than changing behaviours. Hazel Notion writes of Greenpeace:

To put the activities of Greenpeace into perspective one has to see them as becoming increasingly a lighter shade of green but with dark green roots. The shift has occurred with the maturing of the small upper echelon of original leaders who still hold power. As a light green organisation integrated into the new environment industry one can see them as packagers and marketers of a new product; environmental theatre. This product is sold by subscription to suburban householders who use it as a palliative for environmental anxiety. Regular doses appear to allow suburbanites to continue normal producer/consumer lifestyles.[13]

Nevertheless, even activists of the lightest green complexion are by their actions being confrontational and for a person or group to choose such a strategy, it generally demonstrates a lack of faith in the society's decision-making structures and/or a lack of access to formal communication channels with decision-makers. Protest action is the resort of the weak and for that very reason. It is the action of those outside of the power structure and as such protestors are unable to influence the way governments will respond to the pressures that they help to heap on them. For example, when Greenpeace blocked pipes at BHP, Port Kembla in 1990 and drew attention to the fact that BHP was exceeding its licence, the State Pollution Control Commission loosened the BHP licence.

Negotiation

It is the frustration of such losses and the feeling of powerlessness that has led to growing tensions in the environment movement. For some the route to power and funds is through compromise and negotiation. The willingness to make deals and accept trade-offs, and to tone down on the confrontation, allows entry into the decision-making process. For Linda Siddall, Director of Friends of the Earth, Hong Kong the route is through corporate sponsorship;

In Hong Kong we take the view that, while confrontation may have been the only posture available to environmentalists in the 1970s, times are changing and so too are industrial attitudes. We have therefore sought to establish a relationship with industry which is suited to the present. In practical terms, this has meant we do not accept sponsorship from companies which we should like to see go out of existence completely, such as fur and tobacco. But for the rest, we try to establish a working relationship so as to better understand their point of view, and hopefully influence them to better understand and
the environment movement some years ago, Murray Bookchin exhorted: confidence incorporated into a policy cut to power and influence through together are supplemented by ideological reasons. For dark environmental groups who are attempting to form links and alliances makers. It is therefore not an option well as shared goals and assumptions between negotiation, are increasingly incompatible. Negotiation requires this way:

This conservation grouping is dedicated to the system as we know it, but desires minor modifications and reforms. They promote a world of nice, sensitive developments: well-managed and striking a perfect balance between greed and need. They are dedicated to going ‘hand and hand’ with developers but not into the wilderness... they criticise economic growth but bend over backwards not to be categorised as anti-development.

Of course any one environmental group will have different types of people as members and it is not so easy to characterise large groups as light or dark green. However Timothy Doyle points out, organisations such as the ACF and TWS tend to be dominated by an elite, often professional environmentalists employed by these organisations. Doyle argues:

The professional elite speaks the language, utilises the same arguments and is beginning to think in the same way as the governors of our society. No more arguments about wilderness; no more talk of scientific diversity; instead the game is mainstream politics: deals, bargaining, pragmatism and money.

The tensions within environmental groups arise because the two modes of operation, activism and negotiation, are increasingly incompatible. Negotiation requires a degree of compromise and trust, as well as shared goals and assumptions between the negotiating parties. Activism is confrontational and is therefore not an option for those who wish to maintain respectability and gain the trust of decision-makers. Negotiation is not an option which is available to more radical environmentalists. Leaders of environmental groups who are attempting to form links and alliances with the power structure will be wary of those in the group who undermine the group’s “respectability” with activism that challenges and confronts that power structure.

Iideological Constraints on Negotiation

These practical reasons for there not being much room for activism and negotiation to sit comfortable together are supplemented by ideological reasons. For dark green environmentalists, there is no short cut to power and influence through compromise. They believe that green values can only be incorporated into a policy making system which emerges after a paradigm shift. Many do not have confidence in the sort of gradual reform espoused by light green environmentalists. In an open letter to the environment movement some years ago, Murray Bookchin exhorted:

The fear of “isolation”, of “futility”, of “ineffectiveness” yields a new kind of isolation, futility and ineffectiveness, namely, a complete surrender of one's most basic ideals and goals. “Power” is gained at the cost of losing the only power we really have had that can change this insane society - our moral integrity, our ideals, and our principles. This may be a festive occasion for careerists who have used the ecological issue to advance their stardom and personal fortunes; it would become the obituary of a movement that has, latent within itself, the ideals of a new world in which masses become individuals and natural resources become nature, both to be respected for their uniqueness and spirituality.
Friends of the Earth who raised questions about light and dark greens. The ACF was opposed by other environmental groups to support it. However the high temperature incinerator is an issue that highlights the differences between the light and the dark green. The situation is made worse because the environmental movement has been divided between those who believe politicians should protect the environment because it is the right thing to do, and those who believe politicians should allow trade-offs to get other environmental groups which were likely to withdraw their endorsement as a result.

Taking part in the power politics and deal making in Canberra has the effect of entrenching environmental groups, in the minds of politicians, as yet another lobby group which is protecting its own interests and needs to be balanced against other lobby groups. In such a context, the bargaining power of the environmentalists as a lobby group is of utmost importance. The willingness to compromise and do trade-offs in return for influence and favourable decisions promotes such a view which is anathema to dark greens who believe politicians should protect the environment because it is the right thing to do.

For the green groups making deals raises fundamental ethical questions. For them an environmental organisation does not have the right, no matter how many people it might represent, to prioritise the environment and agree to trade-offs that inevitably lead to some environmental sacrifices. Here differences in paradigms become paramount. Within the dominant paradigm, the environment is a resource and those who subscribe to it believe it is acceptable to compromise in order to save the most valuable areas. For deep ecologists, the environment has intrinsic value and so trade-offs have no place, whatsoever.

For the US environmentalists who opposed Earth Day 1990, the alignment of some environmentalists with corporate and government interests meant that Earth Day tended to gloss over the deeper issues, such as the way social institutions and the economic system have contributed to environmental problems. They argued:

> The polluters would have us believe that we are all just common travellers on 'Spaceship Earth,' when in fact a few of them are at the controls and the rest of us are choking on their exhaust.\[21\]

Can Negotiation and Activism Coexist?

It has been argued that there is room in any social movement for both reformers and the more radical and so the environmental movement should be able to accommodate both the light and the dark green. However, tensions arise not only from the differing perspectives and ideologies but also from the practical effects of differing strategies. Good activism is designed to foster a sense of urgency and crisis so that people will cry out for change. Negotiation, however, can work against this by diffusing that sense of crisis and giving the impression that there is no need to worry since environmentalists are leading government in the right direction. This can be a false sense of confidence given the lack of power of negotiating environmentalists, particularly in times of recession.

Activism generally aims to engender public debate but negotiation tends to inhibit it because the debate takes place behind closed doors and only emerges when the parties fail to agree. It is what Brian Martin calls an “appeal-to-elites approach” and is aimed at decision makers rather than the community in general.\[22\] It does not attempt to achieve change through providing information, building networks and creating a public demand for those changes. Rather large environmental groups try to establish themselves as the representatives of all those who are environmentally inclined and to act on their behalf in negotiations with those in power.

To some extent this can disenfranchise those of the dark green complexion because the more successful some environmental leaders are at persuading the public and the policy makers that they represent the environment, the more those environmentalists who hold different viewpoints are marginalised and the more difficult it is for their viewpoints to be heard. This can effect which issues get on the environmental agenda. Groups such as the ACF and TWS have tended to concentrate on forestry and wilderness issues rather than issues of pollution and waste disposal. Phil Tighe and Ros Taplin noted at the Ecopolitics IV Conference:

> Forestry and wilderness issues in Australian have been distinguished by three related features: they attract significant middle class popular support, particularly in the capital city electorates; they centre on the preservation (or destruction) of aesthetic landscapes at considerable distance from these urban centres of greatest support; and they never directly challenge the dominant economic and material concerns of their supporters.\[23\]

More importantly the stance that one takes on an issue will be determined by one’s shade of green. In practice this can lead to environmentalists taking opposing sides in a controversy. The involvement of the ACF in the hazardous waste issue in the last few years has been one of working with government. They were represented on the four member Joint Taskforce on Intractable Waste which was set up to establish a high temperature incinerator for burning hazardous wastes. They negotiated with government to ensure certain conditions were incorporated into the legislation and in return they helped to convince the public that the incinerator would be completely safe and to get other environmental groups to support it.

However the high temperature incinerator is an issue that highlights the differences in attitudes between light and dark greens. The ACF was opposed by other environmental groups such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth who raised questions about whether environmentalists should help industry to
dispose of wastes that should not have been produced in the first place; questions about whether it was likely governments would build an expensive end of the pipe solution for hazardous wastes and still do all that was necessary to minimise wastes once it was built; questions about whether enough is known about hazardous waste incinerators to guarantee their safety; questions about whether, if incinerators are not safe, a rural community and its environment should be sacrificed so hazardous wastes could be moved out of the city.

For environmentalists finding themselves on opposing sides of an issue such as this the ideological divide between light and dark green is not merely a theoretical question. Unless these fundamental differences are recognised a united National Green Party is unlikely to be successful in Australia.

Endnotes

[2] Resource Security Legislation involves guaranteeing quantities of resources such as timber to companies investing more than $100 million in projects such as pulp mills.
[8] See other papers in this volume.

Professor Sharon Beder is an honorary professorial fellow at the University of Wollongong. Sharon Beder’s Publications can be found at http://www.uow.edu.au/~sharonb