

Postenvironmentalism

Chiara Certomà

Postenvironmentalism

A Material Semiotic Perspective on Living Spaces

palgrave
macmillan

Chiara Certomà
Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna
Pisa, Italy

ISBN 978-1-137-50789-1 ISBN 978-1-137-50790-7 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-50790-7

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016948582

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2016

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use. The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made.

Cover illustration: Cover pattern © Melisa Hasan

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Pivot imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Nature America Inc.
The registered company address is: 1 New York Plaza, New York, NY 10004, U.S.A.

To Allegra and Marco

CREDITS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is inspired by the work of environmentalist collectives that make their best, every day, to turn ordinary places into “living spaces.”

I am greatly indebted to Juliet Jane Fall for the friendly encouragement and the insightful suggestions. For sharing with me the joy of thinking through environmental politics, and the difficult task of making things public, I want to thank Eloisa Cristiani and Marco Frey, together with Barbara Henry, who supported my very first steps into the post-environmentalist theory. I had the pleasure of working with them at the Scuola Superiore Sant’Anna, which offered me the opportunity to conduct my research in an intellectually vibrant community.

In developing my work, I have been very much inspired by conversations with Christof Mauch and Helmut Thrichler at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, where I experienced the pleasure of enjoying high-level research in environmental humanities. Steve Hinchliffe, Doreen Massey, Nick Bingham, and the colleagues at The Open University introduced me to the world of material semiotics, by challenging all my previous beliefs about environmental politics.

I explored most of the topics addressed in this book with enthusiastic collaboration with Luca Colombo, Pascal Acot, Francesco Rizzi, Massimo Battaglia, Silvia Cioli, and Luca D’Eusebio; they provided me with fresh perspectives and cases to work upon.

The series editors Sara Doskow and Chris Robinson at Palgrave Macmillan have been extremely supportive in the entire managing process, together with the editors Brenda Black and Kirsten Saliste. Thanks to all. Pictures 1.2 and 5.3 have been kindly offered by my friend Alessandro Pozzi and by Zappata

Romana, while picture 6.1 is an art piece by my daughter Allegra Guerrazzi. Special thanks to all of them.

Moreover, I'm lucky to share part of my life with special people who have taught me what it practically means "to go beyond the end." Particularly, I owe a lot to my friends at the environmental associations ASUD, *Ecologia e Cooperazione*, and *Legambiente* and to the communitarian companions from *La Comune di Bagnaia* (and its friends). Last but not least, I thank my family for its unconditional support.

CONTENTS

1	Introduction	1
1.1	<i>A World in Commotion</i>	3
1.2	<i>Green, Green, My World Is Green . . .</i>	6
2	At the Edge of Environmental Thinking	19
2.1	<i>Realism and Constructivism</i>	21
2.2	<i>Normalization and Mainstreaming</i>	32
3	Is This the End of Environmentalism, as We Know It?	41
3.1	<i>The Political Ecology Framework</i>	42
3.2	<i>Prophets of the End: The Emergence of Post-environmentalism</i>	47
3.3	<i>Post-ecologism. A Constructivist Interpretation of Post-environmentalism</i>	56
4	Postenvironmentalism <i>beyond</i> Post-environmentalism	69
4.1	<i>From Post-environmentalism to Postenvironmentalism</i>	72
4.2	<i>Hybrid Actors in Heterogeneous Networks</i>	76
4.3	<i>Toward a Material-Semiotic Postenvironmentalism</i>	87
5	Materializing Postenvironmentalism in Living Spaces	95
5.1	<i>Space Matter(s): On the Emergence of Living Spaces</i>	97
5.2	<i>Assemble, Mobilize, Impact!</i>	103

6 Summary and Conclusion	113
6.1 <i>Against Environmental Thinking Institutionalization</i>	115
6.2 <i>Are We Really Walking on the Edge?</i>	118
6.3 <i>Postenvironmentalist Agency in Living Spaces</i>	120
References	125
Index	143

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANT	Actor-Network Theory
BES	Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
CERs	Certified Emission Reductions
CGY	Certificado de Garantía Yasuní (Yasuní Guarantee Certificates)
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
EMS	Environmental Management System
ICLEI	International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives
IPCC	International Panel on Climate Change
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
ITT	Ishpingo-Tambococha-Tiputini
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
TEEB	The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UN-REDD	United Nations Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Degradation Programme

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1.1	The transformation of environmental thinking	8
Fig. 1.2	An environmentalist protest against TEBIO congress on biotechnology, Genua, May 2000. Banner says: “Quando il mondo è in vendita, ribellarsi è naturale” (When the world is on sale, rebellion is natural)	10
Fig. 4.1	Toward material-semiotic postenvironmentalism	75
Fig. 5.1	Key concepts in material-semiotic approach and ANT relevant for postenvironmentalism	99
Fig. 5.2	A simplified schematization of issue-based actor network	104
Fig. 5.3	A view on “Orti Urbani Garbatella”, one of the first urban gardening initiatives in Rome	110
Fig. 6.1	A child’s representational drawing of the ANT mediation and translation processes in ANT. Birds, clouds, stars, and airplanes are in the sky; flowers and trees root in the earth; and worms move beneath the earth. A magician-scientist stands with tools in her hands to listen to nonhuman “speeches” and speak with the nonhuman world on her turn	123

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1	A synthetic comparison between Young, Shellenberger and Nordhaus, and Blühdorn's reference theories	65
-----------	---	----

LIST OF BOXES

Box 1.1	Communication and de-politicization: Al Gore’s “convenient” strategy about global warming	11
Box 1.2	Dealing with environmental issues through corporate social responsibility: the UN Global Compact	13
Box 2.1	Farmers’ associations, Monsanto, and the seeds of discord: the Italian campaign “Grano o grane” against genetically modified wheat	22
Box 2.2	Campaigning for the rainforest. The Western construction of indigenous environmental culture	27
Box 2.3	The (ineffective) mainstreaming of the fight against climate change	35
Box 3.1	A Green New Deal for the post-environmentalist age?	50
Box 3.2	The post-ecologist construction of nature: the international campaign “ <i>El Yasuní Depende de Ti</i> ”	62
Box 4.1	Dissolving categories: forest, savannah, and indigenous categories of nature	77
Box 5.1	Living spaces	99
Box 5.2	Spontaneous networking for urban smartness	106
Box 5.3	Postenvironmentalist gardening	109