

Global capitalism and the environment



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

- Tong Huong Ly

Abstract: A lot of researchers have examined the connection between capitalism and environmentalism. In this paper, I draw on those resources to build my argument. Firstly, I argue that capitalism has encouraged environmentalism by blurring borders and distance. In particular, technological advances have supported interconnections between places and allowed people to work together to protect the environment. This point is supported by (1) the analysis of environmental justice and (2) the example of social media in environmental protest. Secondly, I contend that, capitalism has also strengthened the specificity of places. Climate change's effects vary between nations, as well as, local regions. Environmental justice is revisited, with an example of the aftermath of Katrina Hurricane in New Orleans. I expand my argument by discussing the different ability of countries to reduce climate change, hence, different approaches must be developed. I conclude that when facing environmentalism, even though capitalism has significantly reduced border barriers and imposed a sense of placelessness, human experiences are still shaped by local geographies. Thus, the role of places is a topic worth a close look.

KEY WORDS: capitalism, globalisation, environmentalism, dislocation, local geography.

Research Scope:

Theoretical aspect: Environmental justice is defined as ' an attempt to broaden the definition and scope of environmentalism to include basic needs

of poor and politically less powerful group.’ This promotes equality for all humans, regardless of their locations (Scholesberg, 2007).

Geographical areas :

Social media : Twitter played an important role in the Protest at 2009 United Nations Climate Summit in Copenhagen (#thewave). Twitter provides a cyber space that connects people from different places around the world. Activists can utilise this to structure and enable the protest to take place (Ward, 2009). This is an evidence of how technological advances, developed by capitalism, can overcome distance barriers and connect people, thus, encouraging the social movement of environmental justice. (Seegerberg & Bennett, 2011)

The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans : Human experiences after the hurricane are distinguished by their level of wealth. In particular, affluent people are able to hire workers to return to New Orleans and hire workers to set up and clean their houses. Meanwhile, poor working class could not rely on anyone to do the work but themselves (Allen, 2007). This is a proof of environmental injustice, which signifies how human experiences can be shaped by local geographies.

Essay plan:

I, Introduction(200 words): Introduce key arguments.

II, Body(1550 words):

1, A sense of dislocation(800 words): Explain how capitalism had affected to environmentalism in a global scale:

a, Capitalism's bad effects on the environment: (200 words)

- Capitalism has led to escalating emission of greenhouse gases, land use changes, which has significant effects on a global scale (Clark & York, 2005).
- This experience is shared by all humans and non-humans.

b, Capitalism encourages environmentalism: (200 words)

- Capitalism is a major force for globalisation. Globalisation has supported increasing telecommunication, which allows countries to work together to reduce climate change.
- Use example: Earth Summit. Leaders of many countries come together to discuss the most suitable course of actions for environmentalism development. This transcends borders. (United Nations, 1992, 2002)
- Internet interconnects people in different places. People come together in one cyber space to discuss environmentalism and take actions. Distance is minimised.

c, Link to environmental justice: (200 words)

- Define environmental justice
- Explain Scholosberg's environmental justice approach. (Scholesberg, 2007)

=> Everybody works towards a better outcome for environment and humans, aiming to achieve equality regardless of places.

d, An example of environmental justice movement: (200 words)

- Environmental justice is not only a research subject but also a social movement that relies on collective actions.
- Use example: Twitter's role (#thewave) in the protest at 2009 United Nations Climate Summit in Copenhagen (Seegerberg & Bennett, 2011)
- Result: 50, 000 people turned out to the march. It was ' the biggest climate change march in the world ever!' (Stop Climate Change Chaos Coalition, 2009)

=> Social media have blurred barriers and borders.

2, Specificity of places still exist(750 words):

a, Capitalism leads to environmental injustice in different nations/
locations(250 words):

- Global scale: Developed countries try to dump waste to developing countries. Use Chief of World Bank's quote in 1991 (Frey, 1998).
- Developing countries are forced to face more by environmental threats. Use World Health Organisation statistics (Frechette, 2002).

b, Link to environmental justice(250 words):

- National scale: minority communities are affected more.
- Use New Orleans (a local scale) as case study. Human experiences are shaped by their level of wealth (Allen, 2007).

c, Different ability to address environmentalism:(250 words)

- The ability to reduce climate change differs amongst countries. Eg: Developed countries with advanced technology are able to do more than developing countries (Mikler & Harrison, 2012).
- ‘ Internet is global in its reach, but territorially uneven in its layout’ (Castells, 2001: 209). Infrastructure differs, leading to uneven access to online social movement.
- Each country must have different approaches to climate change. Experiences are still highlighted by local geographies.

III, Conclusion(200 words): Summarise key arguments. Suggest the importance of places in environmentalism approach.

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