



The EcoPolitics Podcast – Episode 2.2: Introduction to Global Ecopolitics 2 (TRANSCRIPT)

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INTRO: In this episode, we speak with Dr. Hayley Stevenson, Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science and International Relations at l'Universidad Torcuato Di Tella in Buenos Aires, and Dr. Simon Dalby, Professor at the Balsillie School of International Affairs, Wilfrid Laurier University. From defining the field of global ecopolitics to delving into the concept of environmental security (and calling 'bullshit' on the greenwashing policies in between), this wide-ranging conversation helps set the scene for Season 2 of The EcoPolitics Podcast.

[00:00:00] **Simon Dalby:** We live in a world of unsustainability in so far as the past stable policy and conditions of the world are no longer accurate, reliable predictors of what's coming and our policy, our politics, and our thinking, needs to be updated to understand this new contextualization.

[00:00:22] **Ryan M. Katz-Rosene:** Hello everyone. Welcome to episode two of the EcoPolitics Podcast, season two, Global Ecopolitics. So this is a podcast for university students tackling some of the big questions in the field of global environmental politics. I'm Ryan Katz-Rosene from the University of Ottawa and I'm co-host of the show along with Dr. Peter Andrée from Carleton University. How's it going, Peter?

[00:00:47] **Peter Andrée:** Hi Ryan. It's great to be here today. I'm really looking forward to our conversation with Hayley and Simon.

[00:00:53] **Ryan M. Katz-Rosene:** So am I, and why don't I introduce them right now? We are both here with Dr. Hayley Stevenson, Associate Professor in the department of political science and international relations at Universidad Torcuato Di Tella in Buenos Aires.

[00:01:09] And we're here with Dr. Simon Dalby who's a Professor at Balsillie School of International Affairs, Wilfrid Laurier University, and full disclosure, he was one of my co-supervisors from when I was a PhD student, many moons ago. Welcome to both of you.

[00:01:26] **Hayley Stevenson:** Hi everyone. Great to be here. Hi Ryan, Peter, Simon, looking forward to talking.

[00:01:31] **Simon Dalby:** Hello, Hayley. Hello, Ryan. Hello, Peter. I am looking forward to this.

[00:01:36] **Peter André:** Welcome to you both. In this second episode, we're continuing to set the stage for the big theme of global ecopolitics. In our last episode, Ryan and I briefly touched on some of the ways that this second season differs from the first and we're enlisting both of you, Hayley and Simon, to help as experts in this field to help us introduce the study of global ecopolitics or the field of global environmental politics to our listeners.

[00:02:02] So I'm going to start with you Hayley since you recently wrote a textbook titled 'Global Environmental Politics', which both Ryan and I use in our classes by the way. Can you help us give some definition to this field of study by telling us how you see it? Is global ecopolitics a subdiscipline of international relations in political science, or is it a new interdisciplinary field? What features distinguish this field of study from other subdisciplines within political science or political studies, and what makes it unique for you?

[00:02:35] **Hayley Stevenson:** Thanks Peter. It's a great question on how to define the field of global environmental politics. I think broadly, I would say that global environmental politics is the study of how social, economic, and political processes that transcend the nation-state provoke or exacerbate conditions of unsustainability, as well as how the study of how the international community grapples with that unsustainability. And I think that's a broad definition because I think it's a really broad field of study, but I kind of use that definition of unsustainability, which I think is a good way of capturing the nature of the problem that we're facing and how that they're all part of one condition of unsustainability. There is often a tendency in theses when students are coming to think about their thesis, that they focus on one issue, and I think that it's really important to understand issues in-depth on their own, but also to realize how they are connected in kind of broader contexts about sustainability.

[00:03:37] So I think the idea of global forces us to think about how many of the causes of discrete environmental problems are common, how they have common and shared causes, and how, in many cases, those causes emerge from processes beyond the nation-state, or beyond the local level or causes that might seem local also have been globalized, so they're common across different areas.

[00:04:04] One thing I would say, when thinking about how is global environmental politics different from international environmental politics or environmental politics, and I think sometimes it's a matter of a trend - the term global environmental politics has become the most common, most popular. And sometimes people use the term 'global' instead of 'international' deliberately because they want to highlight that they're thinking about actors and processes beyond interstate relations and interstate interactions. Sometimes they use the word transnational.

[00:04:37] I always start my course on global environmental politics kind of clarifying what I mean by these terms, because often they are used interchangeably. I think transnational is used to capture the actors that are involved in interactions across states, but not just including the state itself. The subnational, which is increasingly important in global governance, city mayors, local government, and of course, private actors, transnational

corporations, non-governmental organizations. So the field of global environmental politics, I think it catches or tries to think about and study how these different actors and processes at multiple and overlapping levels are interacting to produce conditions of unsustainability, and don't try to grapple with that and try to somewhat ameliorate that condition or transform that condition of unsustainability.

[00:05:28] **Peter André**: That's a really interesting answer to the question, Hayley, and I think very comprehensive and I just want to pull out one piece of that. You referred quite a few times to the idea of the conditions of unsustainability, and I wonder if this is one of the ways that global environmental politics maybe leaves political science behind a little bit, because there's other forms of knowledges that we as students of global environmental politics need to get our heads around in order to understand that condition of unsustainability and how to respond to it.

[00:06:03] Do you want to speak to that at all? What are the - for students in environmental politics, what are some of the ways that they maybe need to think about their own education as they target themselves towards working in this field?

[00:06:17] **Hayley Stevenson**: I think that's absolutely right. I think you're asking whether global environmental politics is a sub-discipline of international relations.

[00:06:24] And I think actually it's a very - global environmental politics is a very intellectually demanding field of study. I myself majored in international relations in my undergraduate degree and I think it gave me some tools to understand global environmental politics. But I think, I never actually studied environmental politics, this was back in the degree I started in 2001 and in my program, there was no mention of, there was no treatment at all of environmental politics. I think some of the broader issues about how the difficulty of cooperation amongst states, it helps us to understand some dimension, some part of the problem of unsustainability at the international level.

[00:07:09] But it has great limits and I've found to really understand the causes of these problems and different perspectives on the causes and different to also understand the different ways in which actors respond, I really had to read well beyond the discipline of international relations. And so I find myself reading in areas that I have no training in, in economics and ecological economics and sociology, political economy, some kind of public administration, thinking about how decisions are made at different levels and problems in implementation, where international relations as a discipline doesn't really help with that.

[00:07:47] So I think it is an intellectually demanding field of study. There are some things we can understand if we just use frameworks from international relations, but I think all sorts of questions arise when you really are interested in this challenge of unsustainability. Questions arise that you want to find the answers to and international relations just doesn't help with that.

[00:08:06] So one example, international relations scholars often think about effectiveness in terms of was an agreement reached? Did states make an agreement and perhaps was it

implemented? So that's one way of thinking about effectiveness and that's the way that international relations, the discipline, kind of pushes us to understand it in that way.

[00:08:27] But if, for example, China, as part of its pledge for the Paris Agreement to reduce its energy intensity, we don't have the tools within international relations to know what are the problems with an energy intensity target? Like we really need to know the literature from ecological economics about decoupling and then we discover the word decoupling is really just a unicorn. And so it doesn't matter - it's not effective if the pledges themselves are based on premises that quite problematic and that have been shown to be problematic and weak in the economics and the ecological economics literature. So I think we really have to be willing to look well beyond our own disciplinary boundaries and not be too, not identify too strongly with just one discipline.

[00:09:12] **Peter André**: Let's get into some of the substance then of global ecopolitics and this condition of unsustainability, and this is where I want to bring you in, Simon. I know that you've recently published a book titled 'Anthropocene, Geopolitics, Globalization, Security, and Sustainability'. First off, some of our students may not be, many will be, but may not be familiar with the term 'anthropocene'. So can you maybe define that and tell us how you understand anthropocene geopolitics in a nutshell?

[00:09:42] **Simon Dalby**: Thanks. 'Anthropocene', the first thing to note about it is it's a geological term. It quite literally means, in geological language, the era of global and geological history driven by humans - the 'anthropos', that's us. As in anthropology, it means 'people' in the vernacular. The point about it is that the earth system scientists, are increasingly using this term because the previous geological period, the Holocene, which was basically since the last retreat of the glaciers, the last end of the ice age, 10-12,000 years ago has been remarkably stable in Earth's history. Very unusual that it has been that stable. It's been the circumstances which have given rise to human civilization, allowed us to become the dominant species in the planet.

[00:10:36] But in the process of becoming the dominant species in the planet, we are changing how so many parts of the planetary system actually work. Only most obviously the increase in carbon dioxide recently in the atmosphere, which is causing climate change and has us all very worried about the future. But also the extraordinary expansion of human cultivation has dramatically changed habitats, reducing forests when we turn them into fields, and dramatically reducing the biodiversity, the sheer number of species and the prevalence of interesting ecosystems across the terrestrial world. But also dramatically changing the oceans, of course the over fishing in many places, but also increasingly worrisome is both the heating of water in the oceans and of course the acidification because oceans have been sopping up quite a bit of the surplus carbon dioxide we've put into the atmosphere.

[00:11:32] So this is the new circumstances in which humanity is now living and we are changing the world on the scale of volcanoes and plate tectonics, the old geological mechanisms, and what we now need to understand is this: these are the circumstances we are living in and the scale is big enough to require us to use an appropriate language. And the anthropocene being a geological term suggests both the scale of the contemporary

changes and the many thousands of years, maybe tens, maybe hundreds of thousands of years at least, that the impact of human activity will be visible in the stratigraphic record.

[00:12:09] In other words, the rocks of the future of the planet will have this record. If you imagine yourself as a paleontologist or a stratigrapher - two good geology terms - in four, five, 10 million years down the line in planetary history, looking back saying, 'Ah, yes, here's where these crazy species went nuts and started turning rocks back into air on a rate that is quite unknown in previous geological history. This is the period driven by that species and its technology called the anthropocene'. So that's the origins of the term outside environment or literature, but in the earth science literature, which points to the scale and the speed of the longevity of the impact that human activity is going to have.

[00:12:56] **Peter André:** Thank you Simon. So it's been really great to bring students up to speed on the term, the 'anthropocene'. And how would you characterize, as you did in your work and book, the politics of the anthropocene as it relates to globalization, security, and sustainability?

[00:13:11] **Simon Dalby:** Well, geopolitics is used in everyday language to refer to the rivalry of big states and more technically it's really about the influence of particular powers in particular organizations over space and territory. But it's also crucial in terms of how foreign policy in particular is done, because geopolitics is about the most simple, obvious taken for granted assumptions about how the world is organized politically. It provides the framing in political discourse and that justifies policies and practices of both domestic and international politics.

[00:13:47] Mostly, the assumption is that the map of the world is pretty much stable. The climate patterns of the past are a reasonable prediction of the future, we make foreign policy on the assumptions that the past is a reasonable guide, at least at the range of phenomena in terms of climate, in terms of weather, in terms of geographies of where shorelines are, those practical things, which species are likely to inhabit, and what resources are available in particular places. Those are the sort of basic framing devices in international politics.

[00:14:18] But of course the implication of the anthropocene is that the past is increasingly unlikely to be replicated in the future. If we are serious about policy now, we need to understand that we live in a world which is much less stable than traditional geopolitics has assumed. We need to understand that weather patterns are shifting, particularly rainfall. Species are starting to increasingly move in response both to the disruptions of expanded agriculture and urbanization, but are also moving as a result of climate change. So we are in a much more dynamic and less predictable world and that all requires that we think about security, foreign policy, wherever we happen to be based, in taking these new understandings of the Earth's system into account.

[00:15:05] **Ryan M. Katz-Rosene:** So I'm going to jump in here and that's a really great foundation that both of you have offered for listeners in terms of defining this field; this is a broad field, this is an interdisciplinary field that incorporates elements from not just the political and the ecological, but other fields in the social sciences and hard sciences as well,

which is remarkable. And we're transcending national borders because the environment is not bound by national borders and fundamentally we're addressing issues of unsustainability as both of you have pointed out. And that extends to unsustainability at a geological scale, which is another, which is again a remarkable aspect of this field.

[00:15:44] So we're really studying everything, but anyway, I'm going to turn this back into a question for Hayley because your book is fairly recent, it was published in 2018. And I'm wondering when you reflect on the field, when you think about the next edition of the book, what do you think has changed in the field of global environmental politics, if anything? And of course, feel free to touch on this awful pandemic that is plaguing us at the very moment we're recording - for listeners who are wondering, we're recording about a year in to this pandemic - but what do you think has changed and what might change in the book the next time it gets published as a new edition?

[00:16:24] **Hayley Stevenson:** Yeah it's a great question. In one sense, not much at all has changed, like the existing trends are continuing without any real improvement. But of course the pandemic, we're still waiting to see exactly what the impact will be on global environmental governance in particular. I think there are some different conversations taking place. I think especially at the beginning of the pandemic there was a sense, there was a lot of this idea about the Earth is returning to breathe, and the wild animals are coming back, and the humans are the virus - perhaps that's a conversation for another time - I personally don't think that's a very helpful way of thinking about unsustainability. But I think that there were conversations starting to take place about yeah, 'We really needed this to happen and we need to rethink how we live, how we work, how we move'. But there of course is a political inertia that takes place alongside that.

[00:17:16] So to give an example from where I live in Argentina, at the same time that we're all in lockdown, there was an agreement signed with China for massive investment in industrial pig farms here in Argentina. And we know that those industrial pig farms are a hotspot for new viruses. We know that's a potential source of new pandemics as well as the environmental impacts that go along with that scale of agriculture.

[00:17:45] So we see this on the one hand, we do see some new conversations taking place among citizens and at exactly the same time we see just a continuation with the status quo, without really a pause and a rethink of what kind of development and foreign investment is desirable from a socioeconomic perspective, as well as from a health and environmental perspective. Yeah, so I'm not really sure what the ultimate impact of the pandemic will be on environmental politics. There is a sense as well as having these conversations about we need to live differently. There's also this impatience to get back to the way things were before.

[00:18:24] And so I think there are so many kind of conflicting dynamics at play during the pandemic. We also know that there's huge waste, the plastic waste problem, which after many years of campaigning by some environmental groups, finally was defined as a problem that required kind of action. And that's obviously lost a lot of momentum now with all of the disposables, all of the masks that we need to use create new environmental waste. Yeah, there is some major challenges ahead effected by the pandemic, and yeah.

[00:18:55] **Ryan M. Katz-Rosene:** I take that point of it being complex, this issue with COVID-19 and the influence that it has on sustainability, or sustainability for that matter is a complex one. There are trends that are continuing, there are new conversations, is I think one way you put it, and I think that's a salient point. I completely agree on this point of the trope of 'Earth is healing', I think was a little bit far-fetched. But it was interesting to see that these massive changes to our way of life did have a measurable impact on at least air pollution and also I did see a precipitous drop in greenhouse gas emissions. Although as you point out, these are starting to come back.

[00:19:35] **Hayley Stevenson:** Ryan, if I could just add a point there I think it's a really problematic narrative about the 'Earth healing' and that we are the virus. It overlooks massive inequalities and different ways in which the pandemic is burdening different people. But I think it's also potentially dangerous to give the impression that this is the kind of approach that we need, like we need to just put everything on pause in order to respond to conditions of unsustainability. It needs to be much more deliberate and needs to be much more planned and structured responses rather than just being forced into lock-down. In many places lock-down is really politically unpopular, socially unpopular and to have an association where we just need to stop doing everything in order to respond to environmental problems, I don't think is really helpful.

[00:20:24] **Ryan M. Katz-Rosene:** I agree. I agree entirely and at the risk of careening off the direction we were hoping to take this discussion - yeah, maybe we should think about this Peter, because there are so many lessons and questions to be asked about the relationship between COVID-19 and the pandemic.

[00:20:40] I noticed a really interesting article talking about avoiding climate lock-downs and, invoking this idea of lock-downs as these major restrictions and coercive policies at the level of the state to stop people from doing everyday activities and just invoking this idea of making sure that we come up with policies to address climate change so that we don't have to treat climate change mitigation the same way that we've had to deal with dealing with this virus.

[00:21:12] But I want to get back to one other thing, because I know you came up with this example of these investments in these industrial pig farms. And it reminded me of something that you've written a lot about recently in the context of global climate governance, which is the lack of integrity. So you foregrounded this idea and you've called it out as 'bullshit' - you've called out 'bullshit' in climate governance and you've made a point of using that specific term. What are some examples of 'bullshit' in climate governance that our listeners should be aware of and why is it important to you to use that term and to call it that?

[00:21:45] **Hayley Stevenson:** Yeah. When I wrote the book, I wasn't actually thinking about bullshit. I was actually already starting to think about that topic, but it wasn't included in the book. But in the book, what I really wanted to show was this mismatch between problems and policy and practice. So once problems are defined, the policies that are made are always lacking and don't match up to the scale and the nature of the problem that's been identified. And then policies are often implemented incompletely or in contradictory ways, which

means that the practices are even further from the kind of actions that we need to respond to the problems. So that mismatch was a constant theme in the book.

[00:22:26] And I just find - there's this idea that now that we're all environmentalist, so everybody talks about, we've got Shell talking about how a client they're responsible in a positive way that they take the problem seriously. If we're all environmentalist, then it makes me wonder what even is an environment, what does that mean? And I just find, I find it kind of personally infuriating, the kind of the hypocrisy that we see around the rhetoric about taking these problems seriously, and just the lack of action that really matches up with the rhetoric that's been used. And perhaps it sounds extreme, but I would really say that I prefer to hear someone like Bolsonaro say that climate change is rubbish, then have that kind of idea of Shell saying, 'We take this problem seriously. We're committed to a carbon neutral future.' To have the explicit denial, I think is better than having this kind of this fake sincerity.

[00:23:19] One question that I've been asked several times is: where is bullshit not taking place? And the answer that I've given is that I think Brazil and the United States under Trump, so Brazil under Bolsonaro and the United States under the leadership of Trump, there has been less bullshit because they're explicit about their lack of interest and commitment to the problem. But elsewhere, we just see that the action does not pair up to the words. When I say bullshit, I mean that there is a kind of an indifference to the truth. That it's not necessarily a lie, but it's an incomplete - it's not completely true.

[00:23:52] So for example, there's a lot of attention to whether a state adopts a carbon tax or an emissions trading scheme, and what's going to be more efficient, and when are they going to implement it? There has been vastly less attention to fossil fuel subsidies. And I just think if a country is going to adopt a carbon tax and then maintain massive subsidies in fossil fuels, then it's just completely contradictory and we need to be able to identify that contradiction and call it out and make governments accountable for the contradictions in their policies, not just pushing them to introduce a carbon tax, or introduce an emissions trading scheme, without addressing the contradictions that also exist in policy.

[00:24:33] **Ryan M. Katz-Rosene:** That's great and the most thorough definition of bullshit I've ever heard. It's fantastic. Simon, what do you think when you hear about this constant theme of insincerity, this indifference to the truth, which I think we can all see plentiful examples of that in global environmental politics? What do you think when you hear that?

[00:24:53] **Simon Dalby:** Clearly there is an indifference to the truth, what is politically convenient is what politicians frequently say - it gets depressing when the public relations folks for shell companies or for shell corporation and all sorts of other similar companies, follow along an unexpressed sincerity.

[00:25:10] But I think what is interesting in the last couple of years is that many of the larger corporations have felt compelled by political pressure to start using that kind of language and it is beginning to show up - people are getting much more conscious of fossil fuel emissions coming from corporate activity. The larger corporate social responsibility campaigns are beginning to mean that at least some corporations are starting to pay

attention to it, to these things, because shareholders are increasingly beginning to put pressure through pension funds and so on. Increasingly also the financial institutions are starting to think about the climate risks of their investments. If they're investing in a company, they want full disclosure on the climate risks because actually they're beginning to realize that we do live in an unsustainable world.

[00:25:58] We're beginning to understand that everything from commodity chains to returns on particular fuel type investments are up for grabs now. And that is beginning to shift corporate behavior in ways that hopefully will move in the right direction. Because it seems to me that the pandemic has actually heightened the awareness of these vulnerabilities to unexpected hazards, clearly all sorts of implications for business trying to respond to the pandemic. We're all not only aware of the plastics in face masks and the rest of the personal protective equipment that Hayley mentioned a few moments ago, as an environmental problem, but we're also aware of it as a vulnerability because at least failure to plan for adequate production and for monitoring the supply chains effectively and making sure they stayed intact, we suddenly discovered all sorts of vulnerabilities there too. And that I think has got attention, not only from governments but from corporations. So in terms of the unpredictability, the need to think through how to live in a much more dynamic and less predictable world, all of that is beginning to I had a little bit of substance under the insincerity because in fact, it's materially affecting corporations in many places.

[00:27:14] I think that one of the other things to the point about the pig farms, one of the fascinating little sidebars to the whole virus spread agriculture thing has been the question of Denmark, where a virus morphed into a slightly new strain in the mink farms in Denmark - who knew there were 18 million mink in the North end of Denmark being farmed for well, mink is all about fur and status consumption, isn't it? They slaughtered 18 million mink in the attempt to prevent that new strain of the virus reinfecting the human population. Our relationship with animals and our relationship with agriculture is highlighted here. We no longer live in a world of small family farms, we live in massive industrial agricultural systems, not just for food, but as the mink emphasis for status consumption as well.

[00:28:06] We do need to shift the focus, not only from environmental protection, protecting existing bits and pieces of nature, much of which really needs further emphasis, but we do need to shift the whole conversation to what we are making from protection to production, seems to me to be absolutely crucial. And in terms of the implications of both climate change and the pandemic, we need to think about what kind of economy we build back better, as the phrasing has it these days. We have to think about the future of the Earth, are we making more plastics? Are we making more solar panels? Are we making more carbon dioxides? Are we making more windmills? What are we making? Because we are quite literally shaping the future, making the future.

[00:28:53] And the anthropocene suggests that while environmental protection and trying to clean up the messes after we've done bad things is no longer an adequate approach to these issues. We need to think much more explicitly about who decides what gets made. In other words, we need to think about climate, we need to think about pandemics, and the anthropocene as a question of political economy; who decides what kind of economy we

have collectively going forward is now the big question highlighted by the intersection of climate and pandemics.

[00:29:27] So Green New Deals and such things are raising this issue because it is all about how we retool our economy to make a much more sustainable future. That seems to me to be what the pandemic and the climate change intersection has now highlighted. And some of it may indeed be just greenwashing or bullshit. But I think that we are now at a moment when those bigger decisions about the future are being made and let's hope that we do build back better with a lot less investments in pipelines and a lot more investment in sustainable modes of living for the future.

[00:30:00] **Hayley Stevenson:** So I think I absolutely agree with Simon that we need to be thinking about producing differently. These Green New Deals, I think we need to recognize that benefits in one country or improvements in one country, can't be really understood just on their own. We need to be thinking at an international, at a global scale, we know that many countries improve their climate footprint or their ecological footprint, because they change the nature of their economies - they become more service-based, less production-based. So I think that's an example of bullshit that I do see as well when a country talks about the improvements that they've made in reducing their greenhouse gas emissions, when they're imports on fossil fuel intensive produced goods are continuing and we don't see a reduction in those imports. Then we need to recognize that's part of their responsibility.

[00:30:48] And another part of that is of thinking about who benefits and who loses when improvements are made. We know that much of the wealth in the global North has been accrued through the use of resources from the global South, often with problems then returned to the global South in terms of toxic waste, etcetera. There is also a question of many of the kinds of precious metals that are used in the production of much of the green technology comes from extraction in places that does also have environmental effects at the local level, often it has effects on workers and their health and their conditions. And I think we really need to be aware of those of how other people in distant places are affected by the decisions that we make to improve our own environmental social conditions in our own countries.

[00:31:39] **Simon Dalby:** That connects up explicitly with the theme of geopolitics, because one of the major concerns about dealing with climate change is what happens to states that rely on fossil fuel revenues heavily. If they suddenly discover that their fossil fuel demand their exports are going down because demand around the world is declining, and they're not prepared to pivot to a new post-fossil fuel economy, we may end up with further destabilization of political regimes, particularly in the Middle East - is actually what happened a few years ago when oil prices collapsed in Venezuela.

[00:32:17] In other parts of the world of failure to think about this new economy and plan for it may have all sorts of knock on effects and the fossil fuel dimension adds onto the points Hayley was making about the geopolitics, because if we end up in a situation where the Paris Agreement on climate change ends up tightening up the restrictions on using fossil fuels and economies that are dependent on exporting because they're manufacturing

economies will end up using more energy and hence being penalized by precisely the states that have exported their production capabilities to those states.

[00:32:55] So the rivalries among states and who decides how this gets resolved brings us back directly to the questions of geopolitics and if we get it wrong, are we in serious danger of future conflict about the responses to climate change? All of these factors need to be considered in any course that's dealing with global environmental politics, or should that be with anthropocene politics now, rather than just environmental?

[00:33:24] **Peter André:** This has been a really interesting conversation. And we're down to our last few minutes of the interview, in which I want to ask you both to reflect a little bit on what gives you a sense of hope going forward, given some of the rather bleak trends that we've been discussing?

[00:33:38] I'm going to make this even more challenging for you, Simon. I'll start with you because I know that you've written a lot about environmental security, and I wonder if you can first off, just tell us a little bit about how you conceptualize that in the current geopolitical era and then ask you to also speak a bit whether you see any signs of hope, perhaps in how states and societies are rethinking their security and where that might take us in terms of addressing these conditions of unsustainability that Hayley's been talking about?

[00:34:10] **Simon Dalby:** In terms of security, the international dimensions of this are worrisome if we fail to plan. One of the things that is interesting is that militaries all over the world have been raising the alarm about climate disruptions, both because they will actually disrupt military activities, flooded bases and hurricane damaged facilities, and so on. But also recognizing that there are dislocations and disruption caused by storms, caused by droughts, are increasingly disrupting societies in very many ways with spill-over effects into other countries. So security is beginning slowly to link up questions of bio-diversity and particularly with climate hazards.

[00:34:47] It's early days yet in terms of whether that will actually push governments to much more explicitly think about transitioning to more ecologically friendly modes of production, rather than simply trying to manage the disruptions, which across it has been most of the focus. Looming over all this of course is the much larger question of what kind of security would we have if failure to deal with climate disruption leads us down the road to major attempts to artificially modify climate, the whole geo-engineering debate. And that's another looming issue in the long run for environmental politics, because once you start getting into plans to artificially adjust to the climate, then who gets to decide what climate is optimal for the future? Who gets to monitor and check that in fact states are doing what they claim they're doing? If one ends up with a situation with a major drought or one state government accuses another of causing the drought because of artificially modifying climate, we have got major environmental links here to the future security of increasingly artificial world, if that's the route we go down.

[00:35:56] Avoiding that route, of course becomes a priority if you're serious about security relating to a sustainable future, rather than where we just let fossil fuels rip and try to

manage the consequences. We of course being rich states with large militaries, for people without the military option to deal with security, like for instance the populations of Tuvalu as the Delta living populations in Vietnam and Bangladesh, and so on. They don't have the military options, they simply have to take whatever those of us that are rich and powerful with fossil fuel economies dish out.

[00:36:33] So thinking through all of those connections forces us to ask, well, 'Environmental security for whom, where?', as part of the larger discussion. And that question is also beginning to be raised rather forcefully in international forum; just listen to what the secretary general of the United Nations had to say in his address on the state of the planet to Columbia University in December of 2020, and you get a sense about how those concerns are now also finding their way into international forum, even if the media mostly in North America doesn't seem to have paid much attention.

[00:37:05] **Peter André:** Part of what gives you hope is really that these conversations, while they are in early days, and it takes scholars like you, Simon and Hayley, that are bringing it up for discussion from the ground up. But these conversations are increasingly happening at the highest levels internationally and there's a lot of work ahead of us. And I don't want to sugar coat things as I turn to you, Hayley, I'm not just looking to grab onto whatever, but I'm curious, what do you see that keeps you motivated and keeps you from throwing up your hands and just walking away from all of these questions?

[00:37:38] **Hayley Stevenson:** Yeah, it's a great question. And recognizing the picture that Simon just set out, which is absolutely accurate, it's grim and it's really hard to be positive and optimistic and hopeful. And perhaps that's a conversation for another time is how activists and scholars manage their emotions around these issues. So I think on the whole, I'm not optimistic, but there are a couple of things that on different issues give me some little bits of hope.

[00:38:08] One is I think the youth movement in the past few years, which has had a massive impact kind of building on environmental movements. Before them, scientists or the scientific activism and knowledge that this new youth movement has been able to really push forward and attract much greater attention than had previously been the case. And I really noticed that here in Argentina where environmental attitudes are still, really quite weak, and it's still a marginal issue. Teaching, I spent a few years where I didn't do any teaching, I was just researching. And I found getting back into teaching and working with young people has been much more hopeful.

[00:38:45] One thing I do think connecting it back to the issue of bullshit, where I do see some hope from this kind of youth movement, is that there is just a much greater willingness to be direct and Greta Thunberg who just calls it out, she really calls out bullshit wherever she sees it. And I think that's the kind of, we really need that kind of activism that helps people identify, not just the slogan of 'take action now' but identifying the contradictions and the insincerity.

[00:39:12] One thing when I published that article last year on bullshit in global climate governance, so many practitioners that got in touch with me to say, 'Gosh, I really see that

taking place in my organization and God, I'm so tired of hearing about that'. And I've started working recently with Pablo Suarez in the Red Cross Center in the United States to think about bullshit risk reduction, to think about how we can minimize our willingness to accept bullshit, so how can we call it out knowing that sometimes it's uncomfortable to do so, sometimes it might place our job in danger, descent is often not welcome organizations. But just hearing the number of people that got in touch to say, 'I really see that in my organization, I'm sick of it'. That kind of gives me hope that at least that tiny aspect of unsustainability, the politics of unsustainability might make some progress.

[00:40:00] **Ryan M. Katz-Rosene:** Thank you very much for that Hayley and thanks also to Simon, but it has been quite a remarkable whirlwind tour here. We started off defining the field of global environmental politics. We turned into this issue of dealing with unsustainability in a geological sense through a sort of political and interdisciplinary lens. We got into insincerity and bullshit and how that connects to unpredictability and instability in terms of questions of environmental security. We related this to the COVID-19 pandemic and realize we need to probably spend some more time thinking about how the pandemic and efforts to manage it and even its internal causes are deeply intertwined with the way that environmental politics plays out.

[00:40:46] So I think what I should probably do, although I'd rather keep talking about this all day, is just to start off by thanking you both for joining us for this episode and to promise you that we'll come back to this. So these are difficult topics, they ask a lot of us emotionally and intellectually, but you guys have really done a superb job in helping our listeners and also our hosts work through these issues. So thank you, thank you guys very much for joining us.

[00:41:16] **Hayley Stevenson:** No, my pleasure. Thanks Ryan. Thanks Peter. Thanks Simon.

[00:41:20] **Simon Dalby:** Yep. Thanks everybody. Let's do this again sometime soon.

[00:41:23] **Ryan M. Katz-Rosene:** Will do. And I should give some closing remarks here. The podcast is produced by Nicole Bedford and we want to thank her tremendously for her work on this podcast.

[00:41:33] We also have support with transcription and captioning provided by Kika Mueller. So if you're not aware of that, you're able to access a full transcript of the interviews through our website and that is at ecopoliticspodcast.ca. We also want to thank Adam Gibbard who helps us with fantastic artistic designs and digital support, all things digital, that's Adam's wheelhouse, so we thank him as well.

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The Ecopolitics Podcast – Episode 2.2: Introduction to Global Ecopolitics 2 (TRANSCRIPT)
<https://www.ecopoliticspodcast.ca/episode-2-2-introduction-to-global-ecopolitics-2/>

[00:42:33] So thank you very much. See you all in our next episode and stay tuned.