

**The Liberal Foundations of Environmentalism:
Revisiting the Rockefeller-Ford Connection**

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Many environmentalists can rightly claim that they (as a social movement) have made valiant efforts to temper the relentless destruction wrought on planet earth by its human inhabitants—of whom, those luxuriating in their consumer lifestyles in the “developed world” have waged the war against life most relentlessly. Environmentalists can even claim to have successfully prodded many governments into grudgingly paying lip service to the rhetoric of environmentalism, as evidenced by many governments’ adoption of the principles embodied in the omnipotent concept that has come to be known as “sustainable development.” However, what many environmental groups are loath to discuss—especially the largest ones—is their (ongoing) co-option by political and corporate elites. So while the elitist foundations of the conservation and preservation movements are commonly acknowledged, the elite sponsorship that the environmental movement received during the 1960s is less well understood.

Following the end of World War II, the American chemical-industrial complex grew at a phenomenal rate, which in part, provoked the public’s increasing concern with the environment. This period in history also witnessed the equally dramatic parallel rise in the number and power of philanthropic foundations, which began providing a “fertile source for social movement support.” However, despite the sizable financial influence wielded by these foundations, the discussion of the role of philanthropists in funding social change and shaping the evolution of the environmental movement has been quite limited in the social sciences. Increasing scholarly attention has been directed towards the role that right-wing foundations have played in removing the risk that democratic controls pose to the corporate sector through right-wing foundations’ support of radical neoliberalism as an elite social movement. But critical commentary, for the most part, has bypassed left-wing (liberal) foundations. Considering that the largest, most prominent liberal philanthropic organizations, like the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, have for decades actively funded progressive activists including those involved in the environmental movement, these influential institutions deserve close scrutiny.

Like many other unaccountable and undemocratic organizations, philanthropic foundations often downplay the magnitude of their influence on society, successfully disguising the crucial hegemonic function they fulfill for ruling elites and, more generally, capitalism. Yet, while similar claims from other key powerbrokers (for example, the mainstream media) are rightfully met with skepticism, liberal foundations have barely been challenged in this way. Consequently, in most cases researchers accept the foundations’ benign-sounding rhetoric and ignore or belittle their influence on democratic processes. This neglect is reflected by the fact that in the second half of the 20th century, one of the most important books critiquing foundations was published not by political scientists, but by educational theorists. Nevertheless, evidence has been slowly accumulating which shows that contrary to popular belief, liberal philanthropic foundations have profoundly shaped the contours of American and global civil society, actively influencing social change through a process alternatively referred to as either channeling or co-option. Interestingly, although some scholars have defended the need for foundations to shape democratic processes, they often fail to “probe the contradictions to both ‘free enterprise’ and democratic theory implied by the need for extra-constitutional planners.” Indeed, their general approval of philanthropic interventions contrasts sharply with critical interpretations of these liberal

philanthropists' activities. Such criticism is best exemplified by the work of Joan Roelofs, who suggests that:

[liberal foundations'] greatest threat to democracy lies in their translation of wealth into power. They can create and disseminate an ideology justifying vast inequalities of life chances and political power; they can deflect criticism and mask (and sometimes mitigate) damaging aspects of the system; and they can hire the best brains, popular heroes, and even left-wing political leaders to do their work.

Working within a Gramscian conceptual framework and drawing upon Roelofs' critical insights into the co-optive strategies of liberal philanthropists, this paper will illustrate how liberal foundations have bolstered elite cultural domination through the use of consensual (in this case charitable) institutional arrangements, rather than simply coercive ones. This "charitable" strategy has its institutional roots in the early 20th century when, as Edward Berman noted, "more far-sighted" elites "recognized that a societal consensus could only be achieved if the extremes of poverty and wealth were somewhat mitigated," which in turn, could only come about when the "working classes were more integrated into society's political and particularly its economic system and its dominant norms." Indeed, one vitally important way of bringing the dispossessed and/or alienated into the capitalist system was for robber barons (e.g., John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie) to create liberal foundations to support progressive causes like education, health care, and environmental protection—schemes whose unstated hegemonic purpose was to maintain the status quo by preempting potentially revolutionary social change.

Foundation Supported Activism

One major social movement that received substantial financial backing from philanthropic foundations during the 1960s was the civil rights movement. Predictably, liberal foundation support went almost entirely to nonmilitant, moderate professional movement organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Urban League, and the Voter Education Project, which chose to work through well-established institutional power structures. However, philanthropic foundations did not ignore radical groups. As groups such as the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and the Congress for Racial Equality adopted more confrontational and militant forms of protest, liberal foundations provided them with selective funding. They used this process of discriminatory support to attempt to create a wedge between social movement activists and their unpaid grassroots constituents, thereby facilitating professionalization and institutionalization within the movement. In this way, liberal foundations promoted a "narrowing and taming of the potential for broad dissent" by "direct[ing] dissent into legitimate channels and limit[ing] goals to ameliorative rather than radical change." The reasoning behind such interventionist strategies was simple, since "Foundation officials believed that the long-run stability of the representative policy-making system could be assured only if legitimate organizational channels could be provided for the frustration and anger being expressed in protests and outbreaks of political violence."

Perhaps the first environmental historian to critique the influence of foundations on the environmental movement was Robert Gottlieb; he noted that foundations "[a]s much as anyone else... had become part of the process of creating the environmental policy system of the 1970s," which in turn, created a "new breed of environmental organization, with expert staff, especially lawyers and scientists, and a more sophisticated lobbying or political presence in Washington." However, of the subsequent work critically examining how liberal foundations have affected the evolution of the environmental movement, none provides more than a cursory investigation of the involvement of foundations in shaping environmental developments throughout the 1960s. This paper intends to fill this gap by focusing specifically on the role of the two foundations that gave the environmental movement the most monetary support during its early days, the Ford and

Rockefeller Foundations. This study will also examine the role of the three members of the Rockefeller dynasty who have had a particularly strong influence on the development of the environmental movement, Laurance Rockefeller, David Rockefeller, and John D. Rockefeller III. Finally, this paper will look at the way in which the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations longstanding population control interests have critically influenced the development of the environmental movement.

Environmental Philanthropists: The Conservation Foundation and Resources for the Future

Prior to the 1960s, philanthropic foundations had been active in funding all manner of conservation- and preservation-based organizations. The Conservation Foundation and Resources for the Future are two organizations that played an important role in the development of the environmental movement by “helping to launch an explicitly pro-corporate approach to resource conservation.” Both of these organizations relied primarily upon the financial support of the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations.

The Conservation Foundation was founded in 1948 by Fairfield Osborn and his assistant Samuel H. Ordway, Jr. as an offshoot of the Wildlife Conservation Society, with Laurance Rockefeller serving as the organization’s trustee and “personal underwriter.” Laurance’s annual gifts alone averaged \$50,000 a year throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The Old Dominion Foundation (which merged with the Avalon Foundation in 1969 to become the Mellon Foundation) also played a key role in the establishment and funding of the Conservation Foundation and is credited as being “[o]ne of the earliest foundations to make systematic contributions for environmental issues.” According to Robert Gottlieb, the Conservation Foundation initially “defined its goals in terms of research, education, and reports that addressed resource and population issues” that promoted an “expertise-orientated view of conservationism.”

In addition to his other organizational commitments, Fairfield Osborn, the first president of the Conservation Foundation, was an influential and popular writer. Along with his cousin, Frederick Osborn, and William Vogt, who became secretary of the Conservation Foundation in 1962, the three were named “the most influential writers on conservation and population control issues” between World War II and 1964, a significant designation considering that population issues went on to become a central concern to the newly emerging environmental movement. Indeed, according to a 1973 editorial in *The New York Times*, Fairfield Osborn’s *Our Plundered Planet* along with Vogt’s book, *Road to Survival*, both published in 1948, were largely responsible for the revival of Malthusianism within the conservation movement.

In 1972 under the leadership of Sydney Howe, the Conservation Foundation diverted from its conservative roots and made pioneering efforts to link environmental quality with race and social justice issues. This culminated in successfully organizing a conference in November 1973 that focussed on environmental racism and brought together a range of community activists and representatives from the more progressive mainstream groups like the Sierra Club and The Wilderness Society. However, this spell of progressive activism was quickly quelled, and by the end of the year Howe was fired and replaced with future U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) director, William K. Reilly. It has been suggested that Reilly’s management style “was felt to be more appropriate by a board primarily dominated by Pew, Mellon, and Rockefeller Foundation interests.” The Conservation Foundation then joined most of the other mainstream environmental groups in their avoidance of social justice issues.

The establishment credentials of the Conservation Foundation are well illustrated by the close association it holds with the EPA, which was formed in December 1970. For example, Russell E. Train was president of the Conservation Foundation from 1962 to 1969 before becoming U.S. Undersecretary of the Interior in 1969 and head of the EPA from 1973 to 1977.

The group’s usefulness to industrial interests is perhaps best demonstrated by its involvement in helping to cripple Superfund legislation, which was originally enacted in the U.S. in 1980 following public outrage over the headline-grabbing toxic pollution fiasco two years before at Love Canal near Niagara Falls in New York. To the horror of industry, Superfund legislation stuck the industries responsible for toxic messes with the clean-up tab, and the corporate culprits vowed to weaken, if not repeal, this democratic assault on their bottom lines. Industry found an ally in former two-time EPA administrator, William D. Ruckelshaus, who had recently returned to private life and headed his own lobbying firm specializing in environmental issues. Ruckelshaus’s firm organized a corporate coalition that included some of the “leading culprits in hazardous waste pollution—General Electric, Dow, Du Pont, Union Carbide, Monsanto, AT&T and others” to do a study of the Superfund law. “Select environmentalists” along with the Sierra Club, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Environmental Defense Fund, and the Audubon Society were also invited to take part. But the environmental groups accused the Superfund Coalition of being “a scheme to undo the new Superfund law,” so Ruckelshaus came up with a new plan: the Conservation Foundation, headed by soon-to-be EPA administrator William K. Reilly, would undertake a \$2.5 million study of the Superfund Law—funded in full with money from the EPA. Although there were objections to this plan, the Superfund Coalition got its way, which meant that in 1988, U.S. taxpayers paid “for research the polluters had originally envisioned as their political counterattack” against the Superfund legislation. This was all part of an elaborate, expensive, and long-term “deep lobbying” and public relations strategy to turn the public against what was intended to be very effective public health regulation. The corporate strategy worked: public perception of this once popular legislation is confused at best, and EPA documents indicate that up to March 2007, there were 114 Superfund sites where “the threat to humans from dangerous and sometimes carcinogenic substances is ‘not under control.’”

In 1952 the Ford Foundation created Resources for the Future (RFF), which like the Conservation Foundation, was also co-founded by Fairfield Osborn (along with former National Park Service director, Horace M. Albright). Both Osborn and Albright had also been John D. Rockefeller, Jr.’s chief advisors on conservation matters. Direct Rockefeller support for RFF was slow in coming, but in 1958 Laurance Rockefeller joined RFF’s board, and in 1970 RFF received its first grant, for \$500,000, from the Rockefeller Foundation. To put the value of this grant into perspective, in both 1965 and 1966 the total amount of support from philanthropic foundations that gave more than \$10,000 to environmental causes was \$4 million (which was 0.6 percent of all grants distributed for all purposes), and in 1970 this had increased to \$20 million, or 3 percent of all grants (See Table 1). More importantly, between 1953 and 1977, the Ford Foundation provided RFF with nearly \$48 million, or just over half of all the funds they designated for environmental projects (See Table 2).

Table 1. Total foundation grants for environmental issues in 1970 as identified in the Grants Index of the Foundation Center

| Category | Grants (\$—Millions) |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| Conservation and Recreation* | 9.6 |
| Environmental Studies | 8.0 |
| Earth and Oceanography | 1.1 |
| Agriculture | 0.8 |
| Museums | 0.1 |

Total **19.6**

*Grants that appeared to be completely recreational, such as grants for sports, are not included.

Table 2. Selected major environmental actions funded by the Ford Foundation, 1948-1978

| Selected Major Actions | | Grants (\$—Millions) |
|---|-------------|-----------------------------|
| Resources for the Future | (1953-1977) | 47.5 |
| Ecological Training and Research | (1967-1970) | 9.8 |
| Environmental Law | (1968-1978) | 7.2 |
| Energy Policy Project | (1972-1975) | 4.2 |
| Regional Environmental Management Program | (1970-1974) | 3.2 |
| Environmental Policy Analysis | (1974-1977) | 2.7 |
| Save the Redwoods League | (1965-1968) | 1.5 |
| The Nature Conservancy | (1966-1973) | 1.5 |
| International Union for the Conservation of Nature and National Resources | (1970-1974) | 1.0 |
| Municipal Conservation Commissions | (1972-1975) | 0.7 |
| Total | | 79.3 |

Source: Richard Magat, *The Ford Foundation at Work, Philanthropic Choices, Methods, and Styles* (New York: Plenum Press, 1979), pp. 186-187.

The creation of RFF was integrally linked to the outcomes of the Materials Policy Commission, which was presided over by American broadcasting mogul, William S. Paley, a founding director of RFF. In June 1952, The Materials Policy Commission produced a report entitled “Resources for Freedom,” which provided a “detailed inventory of each strategic resource located in the underdeveloped countries.” This report is credited as first officially “add[ing] a national security component to the field of conservation.” The Paley Commission openly affirmed America’s

inalienable right to extract cheap supplies of raw materials from the underdeveloped countries, and... set the background for Eisenhower and [John Foster] Dulles’ oft-quoted concern over the fate of the tin and tungsten of Southeast Asia. Insuring adequate supplies of resources for the future became a conservationist byword.

A few weeks after the Paley Commission report was published, Fairfield Osborn received the Theodore Roosevelt Distinguished Service Medal and began his acceptance speech by noting that “Conservation... must come to be thought of as essential to any national defense program.”

RFF’s first significant event was the Mid-Century Conference, held in December 1953. This was “the first major national conservation conference since Teddy Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot staged the National Governors’ Conference in 1908.” Corporations dominated the proceedings: the conference was chaired by Lewis Douglas of Mutual Life Insurance, convened by the Ford Foundation, and the conference steering committee “consisted of executives from cattle companies, the Farm Bureau, the American Petroleum Institute, Standard Oil, Newmont Mining, and Monangahela Power, with only Ira Gabrielson of the Wildlife Management Institute representing any of the conservationist advocacy groups.”

Under the guidance of economist Joseph L. Fisher, RFF “characteristically approached [natural resource] problems from the viewpoint of economics,” and in the 1960s RFF staff became strong proponents of cost-benefit analysis. Such analyses later became “a near sacrament

in government planning,” gaining widespread prominence in the 1980s when it was “[m]andated as federal policy and regulatory procedure by an executive order of Ronald Reagan.”

Ignoring the Grassroots: The Ford Foundation and the “Radical Flank Effect”

Although both the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations were clearly contributing to environmental activities well before the 1960s, the Ford Foundation was the first to institutionalize its commitment to the environmental arena when it created its Resources and Environment Program in 1965. This program granted the “largest single, continuing supply of private money into the environmental field” and initially ranged between \$5-6 million a year. Shortly thereafter, the Rockefeller Foundation followed the Ford Foundation, and in 1969 it established a separate environmental program as one of its six subject areas of program interest.

Another environmental group that received major support from the Ford Foundation was Save the Redwoods League, which was awarded \$1.5 million between 1965 and 1968. (See Table 2.) Save the Redwoods League was also a favorite of the Rockefellers, who had provided it with several million dollars since the mid-1920s. Contrary to its green-sounding name, during the 1960s the League played a vital role in opposing the creation of a new national park in California’s Redwood Creek, the site agreed upon by both the National Park Service and the Sierra Club. With the aid of Laurance Rockefeller, the League supported lobbying efforts to have the park established in the Mill Creek area, the site preferred by the local timber companies—most notably, the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company. Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall recalled that: “Laurance had close ties with the people at Weyerhaeuser and prided himself on the fact that he could talk to them as one businessman to another.” In fact, Martin Litton, a journalist and close friend of David Brower’s, had already suggested that “everything Save the Redwoods League had [ever] done had been pretty much under the control of the logging companies.” Despite these barriers, in 1968 the Redwood National Park was eventually created. However, Udall believed that it was Laurance’s backdoor dealings that had led to the park being much smaller than it might have been.

Various researchers have noted that the New Left political discourse of the 1960s was supplanted in the early 1970s with a technical environmental discourse whose scientific and legal approach encouraged environmentalists to believe that economic and legal incentives and reforms would be sufficient to protect the environment. No doubt the adoption of this elitist discourse was facilitated by the Ford Foundation’s support of environmental professionalism in the late 1960s, most clearly evident when they helped create three new environmental law firms, the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), and the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund. These legal environmental groups received the lion’s share of the Ford Foundation’s funding for environmental movements, especially in 1970, when 65 percent of all funding went to just four organizations, the EDF, NRDC, the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund, and the Scientists Institute for Public Education. Although the Ford Foundation did not directly control these organizations’ activities, it was able to use its funding leverage to coerce the NRDC into dropping its controversial strategy of suing corporations. Furthermore, to ensure that EDF and NRDC took on “appropriate” projects, the Ford Foundation vetted their work by setting up an oversight board that was composed of five past-presidents of the American Bar Association. In EDF’s case, a Litigation Review Committee also kept a watchful eye on its development. The reasons behind the Ford Foundation’s actions are best described by McGeorge Bundy, president of the Ford Foundation from 1966 to 1979, who explained in an interview “that everything the Foundation did could be regarded as ‘making the world safe for capitalism,’” which among other things involved “reducing social tensions by helping to comfort the afflicted, [and] provid[ing] safety valves for the angry.”

Thus while moderate groups flourished with foundation aid, other popular environmental organizations, like Environmental Action, were unable to obtain major foundation support to develop their professional and lobbying capabilities. Even though Environmental Action received widespread popular support and was one of the main organizers of the first Earth Day in 1970, its attachment to social justice, which drew upon the work of eco-anarchist Murray Bookchin, was incompatible with liberal foundation ideologies. Indeed, Environmental Action's inability to secure a vital Ford Foundation grant during its early days, combined with "declining media interest in the direct action forms of environmental activity" meant that the group—like others following a similar path—"experienced a protracted identity crisis throughout much of the 1970s."

Laurance: The Conservation-Minded Rockefeller?

Laurance Rockefeller is often regarded as one of the most influential elite conservationists in America, and so it was fitting that in 1991 he received the Congressional Gold Medal for contributions to conservation and historical preservation from President George H.W. Bush. In the words of his official biographer, Robin Winks, Laurance was: "...Mr. Conservation, the man who had done more than any other living American to place outdoor issues—recreation, beauty, national and state parks, environmental education, a responsible combination of development and conservation—clearly on the public agenda."

A Rockefeller with such credentials would clearly have played a key part in any environmental interventions undertaken by the Rockefeller family and its foundations, and it is no surprise that in some way or form Laurance tended to be involved in "[m]ost of the great conservation battles of the mid-1960s." Yet despite the high level of influence wielded by the Rockefellers more generally, Laurance is "barely present in most" books recording the Rockefellers' work. Thus, there is reason to question the authenticity of his popularly celebrated environmental image.

As previously mentioned, Laurance played a key role in supporting the Conservation Foundation in its formative years, but he was also heavily involved in two other conservation organizations, the Jackson Hole Preserve, Inc. (the foundation set up by his father, which he became head of from 1947), and the American Conservation Association, which he helped create in 1957. Laurance also inherited his father's two main environmental advisors, Resources for the Future founders, Fairfield Osborn and Horace Albright, as his own mentors.

In 1958, Laurance was appointed to chair President Eisenhower's newly formed Outdoor Recreation Resources and Review Committee (ORRRC), onto which he added extra staff from his favored conservation groups to aid the committee's work. Laurance's financial independence and high-placed political contacts enabled him to fast-track the launch of the committee, which otherwise would have had to wait a year for the congressional funding to clear. He also successfully brokered with various "foundations to put a staff into place." Immediately after accepting the chairmanship of the commission, he "made it clear that he did not want to be bound by an act, passed in 1949, that limited the choice of personnel. His first move, therefore, was to get an amendment to the act passed, so that the commission was exempted from it, and thus he could get the most qualified people."

It appears that Laurance was able to hand-pick six of the seven citizen-member positions on the committee: Fred Smith (head of the Council of Conservationists and senior vice-president of the Prudential Insurance Company), Samuel T. Dana (a professor of natural resources from the University of Michigan), Joseph W. Penfold (a representative of the Izaak Walton League), Katherine Jackson Lee (director of the industry-dominated American Forestry Association),

Chester Wilson (a past director of the Minnesota Department of Conservation), and Bernard Orell (vice-president of Weyerhaeuser Timber Company). Later, when another committee vacancy opened, Laurance made sure that Marian Dryfoos Heiskell from *The New York Times* was placed on the board to guarantee that “the commission’s findings would not be ignored by the press.”

ORRRC’s first major report was released in 1962 and heavily promoted by his American Conservation Association, which spent nearly \$800,000 on this task over the following two years. It has been argued that the publicity surrounding this report served to provide “the vehicle by which Laurance transformed himself from a gentleman conservationist into a statesman in the emerging environmental movement.” However, even at the start of the 1960s, people within the conservation movement were challenging Laurance’s tendency to compromise with business interests. For example, David E. Pesonen from the Sierra Club, who had worked as a research assistant for ORRRC, “aggressively denounced” the 1962 report as “a compromise,” adding that the report was confusing, contradictory, and “lean[ed] wearily on the obvious, the indisputable, the conventionally wise, the irrelevant.” That said, Laurance’s approach to environmental management should have been expected from somebody with his familial background. Laurance could even be described as a proud pioneer of weak ecological modernization, since he “accepted without reservation the idea that growth and conservation could be familiar bedfellows.”

In a 1963 address to the seventieth annual meeting of the Congress of American Industry in New York, he tried to assure businessmen that nothing in the new concern for pure water and air threatened them. “Business can take this development in stride,” he counseled, “in the same way it has, over the years, taken in its stride other steps which seemed like broad social rather than economic obligations. Like so many of the others, it will turn out in the end to be just plain good business.”

Shortly after this talk, Laurance was appointed to the President’s Advisory Council on Recreation. The following year President Johnson made him a member of his Task Force on Natural Beauty, and subsequently he was appointed chairman of the Citizens’ Advisory Committee on Recreation and Natural Beauty. By this stage, the grassroots of the environmental movement he had helped launch were beginning to question his usefulness to the environmental cause with more persistence. Charles Stoddard, who had worked closely on the Citizens’ Advisory Committee with Laurance, recalled that:

If anyone but a Rockefeller did what Laurance has—donate land for national parks and then develop them and build large hotels nearby and hold a lot of land for development—it would not only be in obvious bad taste, but a conflict of interest, too. But as a Rockefeller, he seems to be able to get away with it.

In 1962, along with his brother Nelson, Republican Governor of the State of New York, the two Rockefellers supported Consolidated Edison’s (Con Ed) highly controversial plans for a hydroelectric power station at Storm King. Despite the fact that contemporary writings acknowledge the contentiousness surrounding this plan—Laurance’s official biographer described it as “the most dramatic clash over industry versus conservation of the decade”—more recent reports provide a white wash of the Rockefellers initial pro-corporate role and instead emphasize their pro-environmental record and opposition to the development.□

As commissioner of the nearby Palisades Park and head of the State Council on Parks, Laurance had a fair degree of influence over environmental decision-making in the region. He quickly persuaded the local Hudson River Conservation Society—a group he had served as vice-president from 1947 to 1948 and a trustee since 1948—to support the Storm King development plans. However, perhaps unexpectedly, Con Ed’s project met considerable resistance from a local community group, called the Scenic Hudson Preservation Conference. Rising public interest in

the Storm King project enabled Scenic Hudson to recruit a handful of celebrities to its cause, yet despite this help, in March 1965 Con Ed was given the official green light for the power station. That was not the end of the dispute though, and the Storm King battle continued to be fought in the courts for the next decade.

The high level of publicity from the Storm King case worked against the Rockefellers, and in the spring of 1965, the U.S. Congressman who represented the area, Democrat Richard Ottinger, introduced a bill to make the Hudson River Valley into a federal preserve. In a last-ditch attempt to prevent federal intervention in the region, in January 1966 Nelson and Laurance created the Hudson River Valley Commission and filled it with leading elites, including Henry Heald, head of the Ford Foundation. This effort to preempt federal involvement ultimately proved unsuccessful, and Ottinger's bill eventually passed. Likewise, after a long fight, the proposed Storm King development was defeated in the courts with the aid of David Sive and two Republican Wall Street lawyers, Stephen Duggan and Whitney North Seymour, Jr. In 1970, Duggan, Seymour, and John Adams, a lawyer formerly with the U.S. Attorney's office in New York, went on to form the NRDC with start-up funding provided by the Ford Foundation. In a strange twist of fate, Laurance Rockefeller was then invited to sit on the NRDC's board alongside his former Storm King foes, Duggan and Seymour.

Stepping back to the 1960s again, while the controversy over the Storm King development was still raging in the courts, the Rockefeller's Hudson River Valley Commission lent its support to the proposed development of a highly controversial expressway along the banks of the Hudson, which, incidentally, would have brought great personal financial benefits to the Rockefellers. In the face of strong opposition from conservationists and initially, at least, from Interior Secretary Stewart Udall, the Rockefellers began to exert political pressure on Udall, who eventually gave the go-ahead for the road's construction in late 1968. However, Udall's decision probably only served to renew the vigor with which the Sierra Club along with a local conservation group, the Citizens Committee for the Hudson Valley, fought their legal battle. In 1970, after five years, they prevailed over the Rockefellers' interests. During the course of the battle, when the evidence against Laurance's position on the expressway became insurmountable, he did cross over to the opponents' side. Instead of characterizing this capitulation as a defeat, Laurance's official biographer emphasized the significance of the case to Laurance "as a conservationist:" the "fact that he changed his mind... moved [him] from being a conservationist to being an environmentalist." The official biographer, however, neglected to mention Laurance's other less-than-environmentally-conscious activities—investments in "jets, rockets, and nuclear research" and his links to the CIA.

Perhaps because of Laurance's apparent conflicts of interest with his professed environmental beliefs, he made a smooth transition from the Johnson administration to the Nixon administration. Nixon kept him on as head of the Citizens' Advisory Committee on Recreation and Natural Beauty, which was renamed the Citizens' Advisory Committee on Environmental Quality. Laurance's continued influence on the environmental scene was evident when in the early 1970s, an unsigned memorandum circulated through the Department of the Interior, "citing in tones reminiscent of an FBI dossier, two conservation organizations that he 'controls,' eleven that he has 'infiltrated,' and eight that are 'suspect.'"

David Rockefeller: The Trilateralist Environmentalist

Although rarely acknowledged in the mainstream media, David Rockefeller was a powerful figure on the international scene throughout the rise of the environmental movement. Professor Dye referred to David as "[t]he single most powerful private citizen in America today." Journalist Bill Moyers went so far as to describe David as "the unelected if indisputable chairman

of the American Establishment” and “one of the most powerful, influential and richest men in America.” Even David himself noted in his memoirs, how some people characterize the Rockefeller family as “as ‘internationalists and of conspiring with others around the world to build a more integrated global political and economic structure—one world, if you will.’” His response: “If that's the charge, I stand guilty, and I am proud of it.”

Sitting on the board of the hugely influential Rockefeller Foundation, the Rockefeller Family Fund, and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, David has been able to exert unprecedented influence over the U.S. government, the private sector, civil society, and other philanthropic foundations. During the period surrounding the rise of the environmental movement, perhaps the most significant organization that David created was the Trilateral Commission, an elite planning group that he founded in 1973 with the help of Zbigniew Brzezinski, then future U.S. National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter, and then Ford Foundation president, McGeorge Bundy. In contrast to the plethora of social movements, including environmental ones, which were attempting to encourage more participatory forms of democracy, the Trilateral Commission commissioned a study, “The Crisis of Democracy,” which concluded that there was already too much democracy.

The Trilateral Commission is very influential both in the United States and globally, and it is thought to have been the major force behind the rapid emergence of prominent trilateralist Jimmy Carter as a national American political leader and successful presidential candidate in 1976. David has also played an integral role in sponsoring other important elite policy-making networks, like the Bilderberg Group and the Council on Foreign Relations. David’s vocal advocacy for deregulation and the free market are contradictory for someone so integrally involved in sponsoring environmental groups. For example, in 1975, he defended the expansion and power of what he referred to as the “beleaguered multinational corporations” and accused the “revolutionary Left” and “radical politicians” of “calling most persistently for punitive taxes and crippling regulation of multinationals.”

“Why the Population Bomb is a [John D.] Rockefeller [III and Ford] Baby”

An important area of foundation funding explicitly linked to the environmental agenda—arguably to its detriment—is population research. One of the most influential groups initially involved in this field was the Population Council, which was founded by John D. Rockefeller III (JDR3) in 1952. The Population Council came out of the initial 1952 Williamsburg (Crisis) Conference, which was organized by JDR3 and had an agenda prepared by Frank Notestein. Though the Population Council was supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, it was “reluctan[t] to take the lead in the population area,” so JDR3 gave the Council \$100,000 to get it going. In 1954 the Ford Foundation stepped in to fill the void left by the Rockefeller Foundation, and during the Population Council’s first fifteen years, Ford provided almost half of its income, which over the first 23 years amounted to \$94.4 million.

JDR3 served as the first president of the Population Council, and Frederick Osborn was its first vice-president. By 1958, the Rockefeller Foundation joined the Ford Foundation in funding its work. Another important figure in the rise of Malthusian arguments associated with the Population Council’s work was Frank Notestein, who had been “patronized by Frederick Osborn” and had worked for the Rockefeller Foundation all over the world before eventually heading the Population Council when Osborn stepped down.

Like the special brand of “conservation” promoted by Resources for the Future in the early 1950s, by 1959 population issues had also begun to “assume the weightiness of a major geopolitical force on the world scene, soon to be adopted as a cherished cause by the ‘military-

industrial complex.” The “population-national security theory” (PNST), “a theory that purported to link causally overpopulation, resource exhaustion, hunger, political instability, communist insurrection, and danger to vital American interests,” provided intellectual justification for this new and more aggressive American imperialist world view. The Rockefeller Foundation “was at the center of the network that produced PNST,” but two figures acted as pioneers in popularizing and crystallizing the theory: Warren S. Thompson, director of the Scripps Foundation, whose most important work in this respect was *Population and Peace* published in 1946, and Frank Notestein.

In 1961, JDR3 stated in a lecture to the United Nations that “population growth is second only to control of atomic weapons as the paramount problem of the day.” Although President Kennedy was reluctant to involve the government in the funding of population research in 1962, he suggested to prominent population activist William Draper that if the Ford Foundation was serious about population issues, it should contribute all of its resources to this work. A few years later, shortly after the 1964 elections, JDR3 was able to exert pressure on President Johnson’s Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, who had headed the Rockefeller Foundation from 1952 to 1960, and extract a promise from him “to try to get some mention of population in the forthcoming State of the Union address.” Rusk apparently followed through on his promise, and in January 1965, President Johnson set a precedent for being the first American president to highlight “population in the official agenda of problems with which the country had to deal.” This marked a “decisive change both within the United States and on the international scene,” and it “is difficult not to interpret the rapidity of change as largely flowing” from Johnson’s words. By the end of January 1965, an Office of Population was created within the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), which obtained around \$10.5 million a year in public money from 1965 to 1967. USAID funding “exploded” thereafter, and in 1968 it received \$34.6 million, in 1969 \$45.4 million, and by 1972 its annual budget was \$123 million.

The Population Council’s vice-president, Bernard Berelson, was also busy at the United Nations and is said to have provided “[m]uch of the inspiration and drafting” for the Secretary General’s statement on December 10, 1966, which called for increased action on population issues. In addition, a UN panel led by JDR3 and backed by the Ford Foundation successfully pushed for the creation of a UN Commissioner of Population within the UN Development Program, whose director, Paul Hoffman, incidentally, was a former president of the Ford Foundation. President Johnson also appointed JDR3 to co-chair the newly formed Advisory Committee on Population and Family Planning. The first main recommendation of this Committee was to appoint a special commission on population, established in 1970 in the form of the Commission on Population, Growth and the American Future and chaired by none other than JDR3. In 1968, new Ford Foundation trustee Robert S. McNamara in his inaugural speech as the World Bank’s new president “emphasized the central importance of curbing population growth.” Thus he was firmly following in the steps of his predecessor at the World Bank, Eugene Black, who had recently joined the board of Planned Parenthood and sat with McNamara on the Ford Foundation’s board of directors.

The mass media also played a crucial role in helping to thrust the population issue onto the public and political policy agendas during the 1960s. This was done in two ways, (1) by presenting “facts in such a way as to mislead readers, e.g., creating an impression that malnutrition in Latin American was due to overpopulation,” and (2) by “fail[ing] to report legislative developments in this area while they were underway, making it harder for the opposition to activate their potential supporters.” The end result was that: “Environmentalists, along with their enemies, ‘the industrial polluters,’ found the chief cause of every problem from slums to suburbs, pollution to protest, in the world’s expanding numbers.”

In 1968, Paul Ehrlich's book, *The Population Bomb*, was published by the Sierra Club with a forward by David Brower. In the midst of this population-fixated period, this bestselling book served to help link the population issue to the environment in the public's mind. The message contained in this influential book was essentially a crude Malthusian argument, reiterating the earlier work of Fairfield Osborn, Frederick Osborn, and William Vogt. However, with the public's interest in the population issue already primed by years of propaganda, the arguments presented were accepted as common-sensical; in less than two years, Ehrlich's book had sold more than 1 million copies and went on to become the "most popular environmental book ever published, with 3 million copies sold in the first decade." Maximizing the public interest generated around the sale of his book, in 1968 Ehrlich created the Zero Population Growth (ZPG) group, whose stated goal was to "place the population issue at the center of environmental policy."

The importance of Ehrlich's work in adversely influencing the environmental movement has been highlighted by Betsy Hartmann, who considers Ehrlich to be the scientist most responsible for "populariz[ing] the [false] belief that overpopulation is the main cause of the environmental crisis." She adds that the U.S. media has also "aided immensely" the spread of his ideas by "persist[ently]... presenting New Right, cornucopian economist Julian Simon as his primary critic." Others have also drawn attention to the sterility of the population debate, which is narrowly confined and rarely includes progressive greens and feminists equipped with more powerful arguments to question the Malthusian argument.

Another well-received Malthusian tract that has successfully linked population and environmental issues is Garrett Hardin's book, *The Tragedy of the Commons*, which was published the same year. Ross traces the evolution of Hardin's work and suggests that when his work is considered in its entirety "one can see how *The Tragedy of the Commons* embodies all the cardinal qualities of Cold War Malthusian thinking: it is anti-socialist, anti-democratic and eugenic." Unfortunately, although the myth of the tragedy of the commons has now been debunked, the idea still remains popular—no doubt in part, because of its compatibility with elitist concepts of environmental management. Later popularizers of these Malthusian arguments linking population issues to the environment, like the Club of Rome's 1972 *Limits to Growth*, added a liberal twist to Ehrlich's and Hardin's work. However, the computer modelling on which *Limits to Growth* is based has been widely critiqued, and although it would be wrong to use the dictum "Garbage in, garbage out," the problems associated with the modelling may be better described as "Malthus in, Malthus out."

Just two years after *Limits to Growth* was published, Ehrlich and Holden presented their now familiar IPAT formula to calculate the impact of population growth. While the IPAT equation has been critiqued by many progressive environmentalists (most notably Barry Commoner), unfortunately, "advocates and critics alike debate from within" the rigid confines of the IPAT paradigm. There is, however, a convincing case for reformulating IPAT by, as Hynes argues in her essay of the same name, "Taking Population out of the Equation."

The increasing focus of liberal foundations on the population issue—or more precisely the high birth rates among the poor in the Third World throughout the 1950s and 1960s—led many New Left activists to be highly skeptical of the foundations' motivations, suspecting that their population fixation was closely wedded to U.S. imperialism. This suspicion is well-founded, as population control advocates acknowledge that "Ford Foundation funding was the major element in developing large integrated population programs with a substantial concern with the Third World;" and that "the main thrust of [the] Ford Foundation's population effort was directed at the developing world." In response, a special Earth Day issue of *Ramparts* magazine explained "Why the Population Bomb is a Rockefeller Baby" with the foundations' agendas tied

to elite interests that were more concerned with devising ways to minimize the increasing Third World upheavals than with protecting the environment. Another article in the same issue described the foundations' favorite groups, the Conservation Foundation and the Population Council, as forming the "Eco-Establishment," a coalition whose aim was to protect and conserve natural resources for the benefit of big-business interests. Murray Bookchin also critiqued the rise of a new "type of biological 'cold warrior'... who tends to locate the ecological crisis in technology and population growth, thereby divesting it of its explosive social content." He added that the "naïveté of this approach would be risible were it not for its sinister implications."

In fact, the summer after the first Earth Day celebrations in 1970, a classified National Security Council memorandum signed by President Nixon's National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger "elevated population control to a 'top priority item' on the multilateral agenda." This population policy supported the United States' already brutal foreign policy; and in 1972, in an effort to deal with the so-called "population emergency" in India, the World Bank funded a \$21 million project that "resulted in millions of involuntary sterilizations and thousands of deaths." The inherent contradictions of these policies was clear to many, and as early as 1970 it was obvious that waging a "war on people" would "not eliminate the need for each nation to determine how best to balance resources and population;" furthermore, it was understood that

where there is greater economic security, political participation, elimination of gross class division, liberation of women, and respected leadership, human and successful population programs are at least possible. Without these conditions, genocide is nicely masked by the welfare imperialism of the West. In the hands of the self-seeking, humanitarianism is the most terrifying *ism* of all.

Indeed, the "chief public rationale" for the so-called Green Revolution (generously financed by the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations)—which has often naïvely been associated with Western humanitarianism—was Malthusian. In fact, it has been noted that: "The Green Revolution was an integral part of the constellation of strategies—including limited and carefully managed land reform, counterinsurgency, CIA-backed coups, and international birth control programs—that aimed to ensure the security of U.S. interests."

This critical view of the Green Revolution is supported by writers such as Susan George and Vandana Shiva, who show that the so-called revolutionary changes actually increased inequality, and in some cases even hunger itself. However, the answer to the question "Did the Green Revolution exacerbate hunger?" is hotly contested, and a "more pertinent answer... [would] note that the fundamental motivations [for promoting the revolution]... were at best only tangentially aimed at alleviating hunger and poverty." Instead, it appears that the population national security theory was propelled to national prominence in part because U.S. policy architects were drawn to Malthusian solutions.

Unfortunately, such Malthusian ideas have always "tended to flourish in times when capitalism has been most severely challenged," providing "an essential ideological weapon against popular reform... by dismissing any alternative to capitalist relations of production as hopelessly utopian." This is despite ample historical evidence illustrating that improvements in social and economic welfare are often linked to declining birth rates. Bookchin concludes that "[i]t is supremely ironic that coercion... has acquired a respected place in the public debate on ecology—for the roots of the ecological crisis lie precisely in the coercive basis of modern society."

Another irony is that the popularization of the Malthusian arguments underpinning the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations' population activities may not have been entirely what the foundations had hoped for. In fact, Ford biographers Caldwell and Caldwell blamed *The*

Population Bomb and *Limits to Growth* for the rising resistance to the population issue, mainly in the Third World, and especially evident at the August 1974 Bucharest Population Conference. It would appear that although those books were on the same wavelength as the foundations, the foundations would have preferred a more subtle and tempered discussion of the population issue so as not to arouse the indignant wrath of the targets of “population control” strategies.

By the 1970s, the Ford Foundation—the main private funder of population research—was beginning to reduce its proportional support for the Population Council as the U.S. government began to provide the Council with larger grants. At the same time, towards the end of the 1970s, other large philanthropic foundations began to fill the void left by the Ford Foundation’s reduced funding. For example, in 1977 the Mellon Foundation seriously commenced its funding of population activities, a decision that was probably facilitated by the arrival in 1974 of its new vice-president and secretary, J. Kellum Smith, who had previously been the Rockefeller Foundation’s secretary. In his new position at Mellon, Smith oversaw the granting of around \$100 million to population issues in the first twelve years of Mellon’s involvement in population work. By 1989 the Mellon Foundation was the largest single contributor to the Population Council’s programs.

Conclusion

The strategic grant-making practices of the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations have played an important role in helping solidify elite cultural hegemony through the co-option of the environmental movement by channelling the movement’s work away from more radical ventures during its formative years. According to a survey in the early 1990s of American national environmental movement leaders, foundation funding remained a significant source of money for environmental groups, closely following the top source, membership contributions. More recent work indicates this practice continues. In a 2000 survey, foundation support made up around a quarter of the total organization income of the large, established American environmental groups. However, although the proportion of an environmental group’s income derived from foundations is typically relatively small, such funding has a disproportionate influence on policy decisions compared to membership dues, because, (1) foundation funding is usually tied to specific environmental projects; (2) foundation board members are often offered influential positions sitting on the boards of the organizations they aid; and (3) foundations utilize proactive grant-making, whereby experts associated with the foundations guide environmental groups to concentrate on projects identified by the foundations themselves. This Gramscian-styled infiltration of social movements by foundations has been referred to as “philanthropic colonization.”

By channeling resources to environmental groups with a moderate-liberal approach to social change, Daniel Faber and Deborah McCarthy suggest that liberal foundations have helped promote “the primacy of ‘professional-led’ advocacy, lobbying, and litigation over direct action and grassroots organizing, a single-issue approach to problem-solving over a multi-issue perspective, the art of political compromise and concession over more principled approaches, and the ‘neutralization’ of environmental politics in comparison to linking environmental problems to larger issues of social justice and corporate power.”

Problematically, the environmental discourse promoted by the largest liberal foundations has also had “an unrealistic conception of information in the decision-making process” with an undue focus on education “without taking into account the systematic distortion of public discourse.”

Although some form of proactive grant-making may be useful if it is done democratically, this is not usually the case, as the decision-making processes of multi-billion dollar foundations is

strictly off-limits to the public. Contrary to the rosy public relations accompanying their activities, which suggest that foundations are strengthening civil society and democratic processes, it is just as easy to argue that what liberal foundations are really promoting is “procedural” or “low-intensity democracy.” That is, foundations are fostering a form of democracy that serves to actually “suppress aspirations for substantive democratization” by “focus[ing] on aspects of democracy which are congruent with capitalism (i.e. individual and contract rights) to the detriment of its participatory and social aspects.” This is an intolerable situation, because “[w]ith foundations im□ posing more constraints on the strategies and methods of organizations they will support, activists are often forced to choose between the integ□ rity of their campaigns and the maintenance of their organization.” Such conclusions were also reached by INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, whose recent edited book— aptly titled *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*—critically examined the reliance of progressive groups on liberal philanthropy.

The (arguably successful) attempts of the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller cohorts to co-opt the environmental movement via strategic philanthropy has played a vital but often unstated role in the evolution of environmentalism. Understanding this and the fundamentally anti-democratic influence exerted by liberal foundations on democratic processes is perhaps the first step environmental activists will need to take to enable them to work towards finding a collective solution to both specific, local environmental problems and the global ecological crisis.

Organizing truly sustainable means of social movement support needs to become a priority for all activists, especially in a political climate where corporations are rapidly extending their philanthropic tentacles into the nonprofit sector. Realistically speaking, it is unlikely that liberal foundations will be willing proponents or subjects of democratization. Therefore, the task that lies ahead of all citizens committed to a participatory and ecological democracy is to develop alternate funding mechanisms for sustaining grassroots activism, so they can break the “insidious cycle of competition and co-optation” set up by liberal foundations. Inspiration for new activist-orientated foundations can be drawn from the leading members of the Funding Exchange (e.g. the Haymarket Fund), who rely on progressive wealthy donors and employ constituency-controlled funding with progressive activists occupying board positions. Alternatively, activists may choose to follow the lead set by the Women’s Funds model, which aims to break down the divide between donor and grantees by inviting everyone to be a donor. Either way, progressive activists from all walks of life must urgently address the foundation issue so that they can devise sustainable ways of supporting radical activism that will be able to create a vibrant and powerful anti-hegemonic discourse that can challenge the dominance of neoliberalism.