5 Recognition and environmental justice

Brendan Coolsaet and Pierre-Yves Néron

Learning outcomes

- Gain understanding of the concept of recognition;
- Distinguish several traditions of thinking about recognition and the differences between them;
- Consider the reasons why recognition matters in the context of the environment.

Introduction

Of all the different ways of thinking and conceptualizing environmental justice, recognition is arguably the most neglected and under-theorized. The idea of recognition is complex and (like other approaches discussed in this volume) has a long philosophical and political history, with roots in Hegelian ethics, critical theory and post- and decolonial studies. Described by the German philosopher Axel Honneth as the "moral grammar of social conflicts" (Honneth, 1996), **recognition** not only deals with the way in which we accommodate and respect different people, their cultural practices, their identities and their knowledge systems, but is also relevant to issues of self-respect and self-worth. The right to be different is protected today in, for example, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The latter requires parties to recognize "the right of all peoples to be different, to consider themselves different, and to be respected as such" (United Nations, 2007, p. 2).

This is important in the context of the environment because the meanings and **values** we assign to nature and the environment are always culturally defined, and people express their differences through a multitude of relations to nature and the world around them. Environmentally harmful practices may thus also be detrimental to the meanings and expression of differences attached to these environments. Conversely, protecting the environment and designing environmental policy are always influenced by culturally specific ideas about what is worth protecting in the first place. Hence, when environmental conservation is driven by dominant worldviews and disregards the meaning and value assigned to the environment by locally affected populations, it may also result in misrecognition.

This chapter looks at how scholars and movements have been dealing with such issues. As is the case with other concepts addressed in this volume, you will not find a singular

definition of justice-as-recognition in this chapter. Instead, we will take the reader through different traditions of thinking about recognition and illustrate these in the context of environmental issues. By the end of the chapter, you should have a good understanding of the concept of recognition, including the key ideas of its main thinkers and the differences between them. We will also look at how the concept has been used by both movements and scholars in the context of the environment.

Theories of recognition

Hegelian inter-subjectivity

The German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel is undoubtedly the main historical source of contemporary thinking on recognition. It all started with Hegel's idea of freedom, which, according to Hegel, can only be achieved if one is recognized and respected by others (Hegel, 1991). Failing to respect a person's cultural identity, for example with regard to their relationship with nature, is a denial of their freedom to live according to their chosen belief system. Hegel saw the lack of recognition, or misrecognition, as a form of enslavement that occurs through unequal encounters in which the more powerful actor fails to recognize the concerns of the other. It represents what could be referred to as a form of asymmetrical recognition. This was famously illustrated by his master–slave dialectic (see Box 5.1).

Unsurprisingly, Marxists interpreted the master–slave relation as a metaphor for the need for class struggle and the reversal of the association. However, in line with more contemporary interpretations, Hegel was able to capture the logic of recognition. In particular, his analysis helps us grasp the crucial role of **otherness** in relations and patterns of recognition. From Hegel's point of view, the master *needs* recognition from the slave, as much as the slave needs it from the master. The critical point here is that a person can only really value their own life if others value such a life. There is a need for reciprocity. For example, it is not possible to have high self-esteem if you perceive that others treat you with contempt. This could be relevant in the context of environmental governance because a person might only be able to enjoy cultural freedom if their ways of knowing and living with nature are respected by others. The required response in such a case is therefore to move relations towards more reciprocal recognition.

Box 5.1 Hegel's master–slave dialectic

Hegel's analysis of the master–slave dialectic is probably the most famous passage of his important (and difficult) book *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel, 1977). It tells the story of two conflicting self-conscious individuals engaged in a "struggle to the death" that leads to the subsequent creation of a relation of subordination, expressed through the status of the master and the slave. By fighting each other, both subjects attempt to affirm their own freedom by proving the superiority of their status.

What matters in this story, according to Hegel, is that one can only gain self-consciousness as an autonomous subject by recognizing the other as an equally autonomous subject. Thus, while you would think that the master is entirely free from the

slave, both are in fact deeply interdependent. In a hierarchical system based on honour, the deference of the lower orders is crucial. Hence, from Hegel's perspective, the master, too, is dependent on the slave for recognition, as he needs his (higher) status be acknowledged as such by the slave.

Hegel's analysis is important because of its radical philosophical implications. In particular, it invites us to question some of the dominant tenets of the Anglo-Saxon tradition inspired by the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes. According to the Hobbesian tradition of "possessive individualism" (Macpherson, 1964), society is driven by rationally calculating actors who act out of self-interest or self-preservation. On the contrary, Hegel suggests that these actors are in fact engaged in **struggles for recognition**, which, as we will see ahead, can help us make sense of some contemporary environmental justice movements.

Moving beyond Hegel, the contemporary use of recognition gained importance through what was termed the "**cultural turn**" in critical and political theory. In a nutshell, the idea is that today's political struggles are no longer limited to calls for economic redistribution, voiced for much of the 20th century by an exploited working class. They also encompass demands for "difference-friendly" societies based on equal recognition of alternative identities, genders, races, and religions, and championed by so-called "**new social movements**" (Laclau, 1985). In other words, status and identity have supplanted class interests as the main political mobilizer. Important in the context of environmental issues, this cultural turn has also been described as the emergence of "indivisible conflicts" (Honneth, 2004, p. 352); namely that identity, culture and relationships cannot be chopped into small pieces and distributed among those asking for just treatment in the same way material resources can be distributed. We will see later that some would also argue that the same applies to the environment.

Three authors represent this cultural turn more than others: Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, German philosopher Axel Honneth and North American philosopher Nancy Fraser. These three authors, discussed in the following subsections, have greatly influenced the inclusion of recognition in current-day environmental justice scholarship.

Charles Taylor's multiculturalism

In a series of works published in the 1980s and 1990s, Charles Taylor seeks to identify the philosophical and historical sources of the rise of political claims made in the name of "recognition" and its connections with **identity** (Taylor, 1994). Taylor, often associated with the "communitarian" school of thought (a label he rejects), might best be understood as advocating a form of "liberal multiculturalism" in which cultural minorities would enjoy strong forms of protection.

Relying heavily on Hegel's insights, Taylor argues that desire for recognition is not a frivolous demand but is fundamental to make life worth living. As he puts it, "due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need." (Taylor, 1994, p. 26) To put it another way, following Hegel, lack or denial of recognition can be associated with a genuine psychological harm inflicted on persons and groups.

Two things are crucial to understand Taylor's theory of recognition. First, Taylor relies on a "dialogical" conception of identity, according to which our identities are shaped through a complex dialogue with "**significant others**" and an already existing cultural background that provides "horizons of meanings". In other words, we do not define ourselves in a societal vacuum. Therefore, to use the Hegelian logic again, identity is deeply linked to otherness.

Second, claims for recognition of one's identity emerge from what he refers to as an "ethic of authenticity". For Taylor, modernity is characterized by the rise of, on the one hand, an ethic of equal dignity, which leads to a movement of universalization based on the shared, universal dignity of all human beings; and on the other hand, an ethic of authenticity, which is linked to a movement of distinctiveness in which the unique identity of individuals and groups is being recognized.

In modern societies, the destruction of formal social hierarchies that assigned specific identities to social groups leads individuals to a quest for authenticity (Taylor, 1989, 1994). Without preassigned identities, individuals are searching for their "own true selves"; for their own, unique way to inhabit this world. In this context, misrecognition can undermine a person's ability to develop a successful relationship with themself. According to Taylor, the powerful appeal of this ideal of authenticity explains the emergence of both extreme forms of individualism and genuine claims for recognition. It contributes to the creation of "recognition" as a "problem" that can ground, articulate and structure the political struggles that surround it (Taylor, 1994).

Finally, Taylor draws a distinction between three forms of recognition, with different political implications. First, a politics of universalism aims at the equal recognition of all human beings in their common dignity. Second, a politics of "difference" aims at the recognition of the uniqueness of special features (often cultural) of one's identity. Third, Taylor highlights the importance of the recognition of concrete individualities in relationships of love, friendship and care. The challenge for a theory of liberal multiculturalism is to articulate the proper balance between these three forms, acknowledging that the latter ones have clearly been neglected.

Axel Honneth's spheres of interaction

Axel Honneth aims to present theories of recognition as the new dominant paradigm for critical theory. He argues that recognition is the "moral grammar of social conflicts" (Honneth, 1996) through which critical theorists can diagnose all "social pathologies" in what he calls a society of **disrespect** (Honneth, 2007, p. 32).

Honneth also proposed a well-known and widely discussed typology of various forms of recognition. According to him, we can distinguish three forms of recognition, connected to three different "spheres" of human interaction. First, love is a form a mutual recognition that is central to the sphere of intimacy. Second, recognition as respect is associated with the legal sphere of legitimately institutionalized interactions of universal respect for the **dignity** of people. Third, social esteem is linked to complex networks of solidarity and shared values within which the worth of members of a community can be evaluated and acknowledged. Whereas respect is for individuals a matter of equal treatment and being entitled to the same status as others, social esteem concerns what makes individuals feel different, unique or special. From this point of view, issues of recognition are not only "cultural" matters. For instance, individuals can suffer from a lack of recognition (in the social esteem sense) of their personal contribution in the workplace.

With this in mind, it is worth noting that, in Honneth's approach, the connection between recognition and justice becomes clearer. Whereas for Taylor recognition is mainly a matter of self-realization, Honneth explicitly places it (as does Nancy Fraser ahead) at the centre of a multifaceted theory of justice. Recognition matters because justice matters—and misrecognition, from this perspective, becomes the main expression of injustice in contemporary societies in which contempt, disrespect and insult are so deeply entrenched in our practices and institutions.

In Honneth's account, recognition becomes the overarching concept that one should use in practising social critique. According to him, even issues of distribution of material resources, such as those discussed in Chapter 3 of this volume, can be approached from the point of view of recognition. For instance, the highly unequal distribution of pollution across communities flows from the fact that some groups are not considered worthy of dignity and respect; in other words, the maldistribution of pollution should be understood as a form of misrecognition. From Honneth's perspective, if redistributive policies are indeed the remedy to this problem, it is because they are ultimately based on claims for better recognition. Thus, Honneth claims that we should think of "redistribution as recognition" (Fraser and Honneth, 2003).

Nancy Fraser's parity of participation

Nancy Fraser's contribution to critical theory is her ambition to combine the emerging demands for recognition with long-standing calls for economic redistribution. For Fraser, the "most general meaning of justice is **parity of participation**" (Fraser, 2005, p. 5; emphasis added). Participation-parity occurs when all adult members of society are allowed and able to interact with each other as peers (Fraser, 2001). In this context, participating in society can be impeded not only by social subordination (cultural injustice), but also through material exploitation (economic injustice) and political disenfranchisement, which are not to be subsumed to one another (Fraser, 1995; Fraser and Honneth, 2003). Gender inequality, for example, has intertwining roots in both economic arrangements (such as rules of resource access) and forms of cultural hierarchization (such as the idea that women, rather than men, should take care of the children; see Chapter 18 of this volume).

Economic injustices condition social interaction by denying the necessary resources to people to engage with others. In other words, parity of participation is inhibited when certain actors do not possess the necessary material resources to fully engage in society: "subordinated social groups usually lack equal access to the material means of equal participation" (Fraser, 1990, p. 64). Examples of maldistribution include exploitation ("having the fruits of one's labor appropriated for the benefit of others"), marginalization ("being confined to undesirable or poorly paid work or being denied access to income-generating labor altogether") and deprivation ("being denied an adequate material standard of living") (Fraser and Honneth, 2003, p. 13).

Cultural injustices, on the other hand, are rooted in the status order of society (Fraser and Honneth, 2003). Misrecognition, Fraser claims, occurs through a hierarchization of cultural values, whereby some people are seen as "inferior, excluded, wholly other, or simply invisible" and therefore cannot equally participate in social interaction (Fraser, 2000, p. 113). In opposition to Taylor and Honneth, Fraser refuses to "psychologize" issues of recognition and identity. To think about cultural injustices is to analyze not psychological reactions, but certain kinds of social relations (see Box 5.2).

These social relations can take on the form of domination ("being subjected to patterns of interpretation and communication that are associated with another culture and are alien and/or hostile to one's own"), non-recognition ("being rendered invisible via the authoritative representational, communicative, and interpretative practices of one's culture") and disrespect ("being routinely maligned or disparaged in stereotypic public cultural representations and/or in everyday life interactions") (Fraser, 1995, p. 71).

To recognition and redistribution, Fraser adds political representation as a defining factor of justice (Fraser, 2005). It is the acknowledgement that, like economic exploitation and cultural subordination, political disenfranchisement can impede people from participating fully in society. This political dimension tells us "who is included, and who excluded, from the circle of those entitled to a just distribution and reciprocal recognition" (Fraser, 2005, p. 6). Together, these three elements compose Fraser's three-dimensional theory of post-Westphalian democratic justice, according to which justice is the ideal of participation-parity.

Box 5.2 Recognition versus distribution: the Fraser–Honneth debate

Both Honneth's and Fraser's theories of recognition were further delineated through an influential debate between both authors. As noted earlier, Fraser stresses that "justice today requires *both* redistribution *and* recognition" (Fraser, 1995, p. 69; original emphasis), rejecting the monistic theories of Taylor and Honneth, in which all claims for justice, including those for economic distribution, can ultimately be understood as struggles for recognition. Fraser argues that, while important, recognition in itself (or distribution, in the same sense) is insufficient to explain the complexity of moral claims in post-modern societies.

The "status model" of recognition, as Fraser (2000) calls it, is built in opposition to Taylor's and Honneth's narrower, identity-based forms of recognition influenced by Hegelian inter-subjectivity. In their "identity model", recognition is a necessary condition to achieve self-consciousness, in that individuals only exist when recognized by others as individuals. Recognition, then, is a matter of self-realization: your psychological sense of worth is formed by how others act towards you. This, according to Fraser, is akin to blaming the victim (Fraser, 2001)

This debate resonates with a longstanding discussion in the environmental justice literature: the **race versus class** debate. In his seminal book *Dumping in Dixie*, Robert Bullard (1990) argued that race is the most salient factor in predicting the distribution of pollution across communities in the US. While confirming the importance of race, later studies have nuanced this, showing that both class and race interact in fostering environmental injustice; "the poor and especially the non-white poor bear a disproportionate burden of exposure to suboptimal, unhealthy environmental conditions" (Evans and Kantrowitz, 2002, p. 323; Figueroa, 2004). Addressing such types of injustices, thus requires that we take into account both the material aspects (class) and the status aspects (race).

Critiques of recognition

Despite the seemingly good intentions, a politics of recognition may also produce a false sense of justice. This is particularly true in post-colonial settings. As Whyte (2017, p. 120) notes, "acknowledgement and respect for difference is often a smokescreen that obscures the continuance of oppression against nondominant groups such as Indigenous people" (see also Chapter 20 of this volume).

This was famously theorized by Martinican psychiatrist Franz Fanon. In his seminal book *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon (1967) criticizes Hegel's understanding of reciprocal recognition for failing to account for situations of racial domination. In describing his desire to be recognized by a white woman, Fanon argues that "this is the form of recognition that Hegel never described" (1967/2008, p. 45). Moving beyond the identity versus status dichotomy discussed previously, Fanon shows how psychological processes cannot be detached from more structural, material conditions. On the contrary, psychological forms of misrecognition can themselves result from a process of **internalization** of social forces (Fanon, 1967). In other words, patterns of injustice may be continuously reproduced through the desires of those who are the victims of misrecognition, as they rest "on the ability to entice Indigenous peoples to identify [with] profoundly asymmetrical and nonreciprocal forms of recognition" (Coulthard, 2014, p. 25). As a result, Fanon argues that, in a colonial context, the slave would never gain recognition even if it were granted by the master, as the slave would have incorporated the master's image of him or herself.

At the same time, the psychological dimension also actively informs social structures through the actions of individuals. There is a dialectics between these spheres. This means that to overcome misrecognition, the sole transformation of structural conditions, as proposed by Fraser, is as insufficient as the sole transformation of the subjective sphere, as proposed by Taylor and Honneth. The identity-based approaches of Taylor and Honneth fall short of addressing some of the structural effects of colonial–capitalist exploitation, while Fraserian status-based recognition downplays the importance of the subjective dimension in overcoming injustices.

Drawing on Fanon's work, Glen Coulthard, a Canadian professor in First Nations Studies and a member of the Dene First Nation,[1] builds a compelling critique of the liberal approaches to recognition by the likes of Taylor, Honneth and Fraser. Analyzing the struggle of the Dene and the Kluane First Nations against a pipeline project, Coulthard shows how the government of Canada, through processes of deliberation guaranteeing the **participation** of minority groups, managed to transform "how Indigenous peoples now think and act in relation to the land" (Coulthard, 2014, p. 78). Over 25 years, these processes not only made Indigenous representatives accept extractive projects they had always been opposed to, but also gradually made them express their traditional relationship to their land in terms of ownership, property and monetization, concepts which are central to Western culture and capitalism but foreign to the First Nations' vision of the world. Coulthard argues that this change resulted from a smooth process of domestication through the creation of spaces of deliberation established by the Canadian state and through which the First Nations of Canada were meant to be recognized.

Recognition and environmental justice

Notwithstanding a few exceptions, most of the authors discussed above do not address environmental issues. However, their work has helped others make sense of the demands for

recognition emanating from environmental justice movements. Despite the relative importance that observers have assigned to the dimensions of distribution and participation,[2] several environmental justice scholars have shown how demands for recognition have always been part of the claims of different environmental justice movements.

Misrecognition in the context of the environment has broadly played out in two opposing ways. In the first case, people who should have been treated equally have systematically been treated differently because of who they are, resulting in the injustice. This is typically the case, for example, when communities of colour face greater environmental risk than do other communities. In the second case, the source of the injustice is reversed: the differences of some people are rendered invisible when supposedly universal solutions are applied in the name of the environment. This can be observed when environmental policy initiatives involve asking people who are not responsible for the problem in the first place to halt long-standing cultural practices and renounce their ways of life (as illustrated by Box 5.3 in the context of biodiversity conservation).

By focusing on **environmental racism** (see Chapters 2 and 17 of this volume), early environmental justice movements in the US stressed that it is racism, cultural hierarchization and disrespect which lead to unfair distribution of environmental problems and exclusionary decision-making processes in the first place. In *Environmentalism and Economic Justice*, Laura Pulido (1996) suggests using a definition of environmental racism that fully incorporates not only economic inequality but also forms of cultural domination. Drawing on the study of two Chicano environmental justice struggles in the southwestern US, Pulido shows how these movements are not strictly environmental, but instead can best be understood as fighting for "ecologically and culturally appropriate economic change, confronting a racist and exclusionary political and cultural system, and establishing an affirmative cultural and ethnic identity" (Pulido, 1996, p. 193). This, she argues, is what differentiates these movements from mainstream environmentalism.

This intersection of material relations and culture resonates with Nancy Fraser's justice theory discussed previously. Drawing on Fraser's work, Robert Figueroa (2004) discusses the issue of environmental racism using a bivalent approach combining both distribution and recognition. For Figueroa, environmental injustices are always simultaneously economic and cultural. Focusing on these two aspects, he argues, allows us to fully grasp that both race-based and class-based injustices find their roots in similar institutionalized forms of subordination. Favouring one injustice over the other may be counterproductive to solving the injustices at hand. Figueroa comments: "Where the environmental racism debate evolves into a wrestle over zip codes or census tracts, race versus class, distribution versus recognition, it misunderstands the injustices, the collectivities, and the remedies." (2004, p. 34)

In *Defining Environmental Justice*, David Schlosberg (2007) too draws heavily on Nancy Fraser's work to develop what has since become an increasingly popular understanding of environmental justice in which recognition plays a key role. For many in the environmental justice movement, the struggle is "nothing less than a matter of cultural survival" (Schlosberg, 2007, p. 63). Importantly, unlike most of the theoretical approaches developed above, Schlosberg argues that what the environmental justice movement has to teach us is that different conceptions of justice are being used simultaneously, irrespective of the analytical differentiation that scholars tend to uphold.

However, this multivalence in the context of environmental justice struggles has also been found to be problematic. Drawing on Latin American **decolonial theory** (see also Chapter 7 of this volume), Álvarez and Coolsaet (2018) show that calling for a combination of both a distributive and a recognition approach can fail to account for cases that are

not amenable to pluralist solutions; namely, cases in which the very idea of environmental distribution would be inconceivable. A contemporary illustration of this is the #NoDAPL movement in Standing Rock, USA. In 2016, the youth-led Indigenous movement emerged in protest at the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, an 1886 km long underground oil pipeline threatening the drinking water and sacred sites of the Standing Rock Indian Reservation. The protests sparked a nationwide solidarity movement, as it was seen and experienced as the latest iteration of the settler-colonial history of the US.

Relating the experiences of #NoDAPL protesters, Estes and Dhillon (2019) highlight one of the peculiarities of the movement. Under the "Water is life" banner, protesters wished to convey that the threatened Missouri River, and water in general, "is not a thing that is quantifiable according to possessive logics" (Estes and Dhillon, 2019, p. 3). The sacredness of water and land is something that can be traced back to numerous Indigenous beliefs, values and practices (McGregor, 2009). What the protesters were demanding was not a fairer distribution of the environmental impacts generated by the pipeline, as this would have implied that the water could be objectified, exploited and turned into a distributable good. Instead, they were demanding recognition of the kinship they shared with the water and the land (on kinship ethics, see also Chapter 20 of this volume). In other words, agreeing to a distributive 'solution' in Standing Rock, in which the pollution would be shared equitably across different communities, would have inevitably led to a situation of misrecognition.

This example also helps us understand how important the idea of recognition is if we wish to include non-humans as well as future and past generations as subjects of justice. It is easy to see how Charles Taylor's "significant others", through whom we shape our identities, may well be non-human others, ancestors or descendants. Interestingly, the very first of the 17 historic environmental justice principles adopted in 1991 (see Chapter 2 of this volume) affirmed "the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species".[3] While this principle has tended to be forgotten over the years, Indigenous scholars such as Winona LaDuke, Glen Coulthard, Deborah McGregor and Kyle Whyte have long stressed the importance of extending the community of justice to non-humans. As Whyte (2017, p. 122) notes, recognition is better suited than other approaches of justice to do just that, "because the very expression of cultural, economic and political differences is often rooted in particular ecosystems". The issues of Indigenous and non-human justice are further discussed in Chapters 20–21 of this volume.

Box 5.3 Recognition and biodiversity conservation

Western nature conservation approaches in the Global South have long been driven by a conception of nature as a pristine wilderness, which needed to be protected from human activity (see Chapter 11 of this volume). Given the powerful assumption that conservation is "the right thing to do", local and Indigenous practices were (and still are) often seen as harmful to nature, leading not only to the forceful physical exclusion of people from areas to protect, but also often to more subtle cultural, symbolic or psychological types of exclusion. This may amount to various forms of misrecognition through disregarding local notions of authority, ignoring local histories and symbolism, or appropriating traditional forms of knowledge.

This is not only a normative issue; recognizing and respecting difference is not just a matter of "doing the right thing". Research has shown how the recognition of cultural differences in the context of conservation can also radically improve the evidence base for useful solutions. Ignoring or excluding local and environment-specific forms of knowledge and experience undermines the possibilities for innovation.

The conservation of agricultural biodiversity is a case in point. Conserving or reintroducing new plant varieties and animal species requires agronomic knowledge, which farmers have gradually lost with modernization and the advent of "**green revolution**" type of agriculture. The dominance of industrial agriculture has standardized and centralized agricultural knowledge and practices across the globe and led to a massive decline in agricultural biodiversity.

"Obsolete" traditional varieties and local landraces are replaced by "high-performance" breeds, which are suitable for mass production. Knowledge and practices associated with the older varieties tend to be abandoned, sacrificed in the name of progress and modernity. Not only does this generate injustices by misrecognizing local ways of farming, it also creates dependence upon an industrial farming model by weakening the emergence of alternatives (Coolsaet, 2016).

In short, recognition in the context of conservation is about who gets to define "good" conservation, whose voices are heard and listened to, and whose knowledge is deemed relevant when planning conservation action. Focusing on recognition allows us to uncover the structural, institutional and psychological forms of domination which often define who benefits from conservation. It also provides a basis for looking beyond a distributive model of justice to incorporate social and cultural differences, including paying careful attention to ways of pursuing equality of status for local conservation stakeholders. This will require reflection on working practices and looking at forms of intercultural engagement that, for example, respect alternative ways of relating to nature and biodiversity.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored different theoretical approaches to recognition. It has examined concepts such as otherness, identity, cultural difference, disrespect and participation-parity to introduce the reader to the importance of recognition in understanding how people express their differences through a multitude of relations to the world around them. It has briefly reflected on some of the political limits of liberal approaches to recognition and provided examples of ways in which scholars and activists have engaged with the meanings and expression of differences attached to the environment.

As with other theoretical approaches discussed in this volume, the different approaches to recognition examined in this chapter may not be mutually exclusive. Environmental justice movements illustrate that these ideas may, in certain cases, be combined to fully capture the plurality of the injustices they are faced with. The strength of the idea of recognition is that it can apply both to individuals and to communities as a whole, focusing not only on individual and psychological harm, but also on more structurally generated issues of status subordination. In addition, recognition may be consequential for other dimensions of

justice. A decision-making process is unlikely to produce a fair outcome if participants are not already committed to mutual recognition, and the conditions for distributional equity to materialize cannot be achieved without involving recognition. Above all, we have seen that alleged solutions to environmental injustices may not be solutions at all if the issue of recognition is not addressed.

Follow-up questions

- Can you think of other examples of environmentally harmful practices that generate problems of misrecognition?
- If you are involved in an initiative for the protection of the environment, how do you consider issues of recognition in your work?
- What does your relationship with nature or the environment express about who you are?
- Where would you stand on the identity versus status debate about recognition introduced in this chapter? Why?

Notes

1 The "Dene" refers to Indigenous people living in the western Canadian Subarctic, including First Nations groups such as the Chipewyan, Tlicho, Slavey, Sathu and Yellowknives.
2 On distribution and participation, see Chapters 3–4 of this volume.
3 The *Principles of Environmental Justice* (EJ) are available on http://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.pdf

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