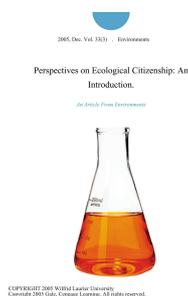


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PERSPECTIVES ON ECOLOGICAL CITIZENSHIP AN INTRODUCTION EBOOKS 2019



Author: Environments

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In 1992 Robyn Eckersley argued that it was possible to discern three "major eco-political preoccupations" in green political thought. These were participation, survival, and emancipation; respectively, they corresponded loosely to the previous three decades of eco-political activity. These three concerns remain central to contemporary environmental politics, but the decade and a half following Eckersley's book has arguably seen the consolidation of a fourth: democracy. As the limitations of liberal democracy came to be seen as fundamental to the ecological crisis, green political theorists saw the need for a more participatory, grass-roots alternative. Other theorists likewise realized that if their ideas and arguments were to warrant broad attention outside the circles of green activism they must find points of articulation with democratic politics. While a welcome ethos of diversity and tension continues to be the most recognizable trait of the democratic stage of green political thought, certain nodes of debate have begun to solidify into new research agendas that have gained attention within the broader progressive community. Ecological citizenship, one of the most promising and interesting areas of emerging research, is the subject of this theme issue of Environments. If environmental or ecological citizenship (1) is a relatively new addition to the political vocabulary, having achieved something of a critical mass in scholarly circles only within the past few years, (2) the fact should not be overlooked that in the broader historical context citizenship and nature have long been intertwined. The social contract theories that underwrite the modern state, for instance, tell us that citizenship grows out of (Western) humanity's exit from the "state of nature". An alternate history of citizenship might see it more closely tied to traditions of political community that predate both social contract theory and the modern state, located instead in a history of urban collectives. Here too, however, we find nature lurking in the wings of citizenship's drama, perhaps most notably in Aristotle's assertion that humans are political animals, who may only achieve their telos by being part of a polis. As Walker (2003: 255) suggests, "'Nature' is implicated not only in many of the most intractable political problems, but also in the problem of what we mean when we say that a problem is somehow political."

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