

# Worldmakers and Worldwreckers

in Decolonial and Developmentalist Imaginaries of Environmental  
Justice from Western Europe and North America in the 2010s

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# Abstract

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**Title:** Worldmakers and Worldwreckers in Decolonial and Developmentalist Imaginaries of Environmental Justice from Western Europe and North America in the 2010s

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This dissertation investigates imaginaries of environmental justice from Western Europe and North America in the 2010s. It explores the relevance of research on predominantly Global South environmental movements and writer-activism for a part of the Global North. A contribution to the cross-pollination of political ecology and literary studies, it develops decolonial, ecofeminist, and cultural materialist theory, and constructs an ecopolitical narratological method—an econarratology for political-ecological analysis of how the power to make and wreck worlds is imagined.

The study teases apart colonial and decolonial conceptions of being and knowledge in six Anglophone texts: the pop music album *ORDA: This Is My Land* by Sofia Jannok; the creative nonfiction *The Mushroom at the End of the World* by Anna Tsing; the science fiction novel *New York 2140* by Kim Stanley Robinson; the investigative journalistic book *This Changes Everything* by Naomi Klein; the design fiction *The World We Made* by Jonathon Porritt; and the textbook *The Age of Sustainable Development* by Jeffrey Sachs. These texts approach the intersections of sustainability and justice from different professed political positions and different forms of knowledge production.

Part I presents a theoretical and methodological framework for the analysis of environmental justice imaginaries (Chapters 1 and 4), and also contextualises the study through an overview of academic-political debates on political concepts, ontology, and epistemology in environmentalism—research in political ecology, the environmental humanities, and ecocriticism that has previously not been synthesised (Chapters 2–3). Part II (Chapters 5–7) turns to the comparative analysis of the six texts, and identifies divergent conceptions of the makers and wreckers of sustainable and just worlds, and of the ways of knowing that can be part of worldmaking. This divergence is understood as producing two poles on a spectrum of imaginaries: ecological decolonisation and sustainable capitalist development. Part III (Chapter 8) further discusses this through a distinction between decoloniality and developmentalism, and considers the implications of the study for political ecology and the environmental humanities, as well as for social movements with an environmental justice orientation.