

1. Ash trees and forests of Indian Himalayas and local activists (Chipko movement), 1970s, India

The „Chipko“ movement started when the Forest Department awarded a contract for cutting 300 ash trees of Gopeshwar to Simon Company to make tennis racquets. In response the local activists, mostly women adopted tree-hugging as a non-violent means of protest. It is not surprising, that women took the leading role in forests protection. They are the ones most affected by the deforestation, by a lack of firewood and fodder, by depletion of water for drinking and irrigation. In 1973, when the lumbermen arrived at Gopeshwar to cut the ash trees, they were confronted by the villagers shouting and beating drums, forcing the businessmen and their lumbermen to retreat. In later protests the movement that was quickly spreading decided to use the technique of hugging trees- described as „Chipko“- a means of non-violent protest. The term "Chipko" originated from Garhwali and means "embrace".

In 1974, when the government allowed 2,500 trees near Reni village to be cut, local leader Gaura Devi led 27 of the village women to the site and confronted the loggers. When all talking failed, and the loggers started to threaten the women, these women decided to hug the trees to stop them from being felled. After a four-day stand-off, the contractors left.

The state Chief Minister's committee eventually ruled in favor of the villagers, marking a turning point in eco-development struggles. The Chipko movement gained international recognition and awards for its dedication to conserving India's natural resources.

2. Cape Tribulation rainforest and Australian activists (Daintree blockade), 1983, Australia

In 1983, a protest erupted to stop the construction of a road through Cape Tribulation National Park, a pristine rainforest in Australia. Initially organized by local residents, it evolved into the Daintree Blockade, a major environmental campaign, as supporters from other regions joined. The road's construction aimed to boost tourism and security but faced opposition from environmentalists concerned about the park's destruction. Scientific evidence underlined the rainforest's ecological importance.

In December 1983, the Douglas Shire Council attempted road construction, leading to clashes between protesters, police, and bulldozers. Protesters established a base at Cape Tribulation, with some climbing trees, chaining themselves to them, or blocking the bulldozers' path. Many were arrested, and media coverage drew national attention to the issue. Despite three weeks of protests, the road was completed, but heavy rain during the Wet season caused landslides and damage, revealing the ecological impact. The road's official opening in October 1984 faced further embarrassment when vehicles got stuck in mud.

The Daintree Blockade spurred efforts to protect rainforests in north Queensland, eventually leading to the Wet Tropics of Queensland being designated as a World Heritage site in December 1988, despite the Queensland Government's opposition.

3. Julia Butterfly Hill and a Tree named Luna, 1997, California, USA

On December 10, 1997, Hill ascended over 1,000-year-old lightning-struck redwood tree named Luna, also referred to as the "Stafford Giant" to a height of 180 feet (55 m).

Julia Butterfly Hill spent 738 days living in the canopy of this redwood tree in a protest against redwood logging by Pacific Lumber Company. Hill used solar-powered cell phones for radio interviews, became an "in-tree" correspondent for a cable television show, and hosted TV crews to protest old-growth clear cutting. With ropes, Hill hoisted up survival supplies brought by an

eight-member support crew. She had to withstand freezing rains and 40 mph (64 km/h) winds from El Niño, helicopter harassment, a ten-day siege by company security guards, and attempted intimidation by angry loggers. Her courageous act gained international attention and led to a resolution in 1999, when the Pacific Lumber Company agreed to preserve Luna and all trees within a 200-foot (61 m) buffer zone in exchange for her vacating the tree.

Julia continued to live as an activist, addressing the "Disease of Disconnect" as a fundamental environmental challenge. She emphasizes that meaningful restoration must begin within our minds, hearts, and everyday choices, highlighting the need to overcome divisions and disagreements to effectively address environmental issues.

Luna is now under the stewardship of Sanctuary Forest, a nonprofit organization, and continues to thrive.

4. Miranda Gibson and Eucalyptus tree in Tyenna Forest, Tasmania, 2011

Miranda Gibson, initially a shy Queenslander with no experience in forests, broke Australia's longest tree-sit record by spending 449 days in the Tasmanian treetops of the Tyenna Forest in 2011. She made a promise that she would not get down until the Tyenna Forest —and surrounding areas — were protected. Her activism focused global attention on logging in Tasmania, ultimately leading to a world heritage listing. Living on a small wooden platform 60 meters above the ground, Gibson remained in the blockade for four years but at the end became disillusioned with the ongoing forest destruction. Most of the food she ate was raw, she used a walking machine and yoga mat to stay active and relied on a ground crew for supplies, including food and water.

Gibson's protest garnered extensive media coverage and public interest due to her unwavering commitment. She endured challenging conditions- keeping dry proved a challenge — with only a tarp as her protection from rain, hail, wind, and snow. The media coverage was effective, and within days the loggers moved away from the eye of Gibson's camera. Her action contributed to the world heritage listing of 170,000 hectares of Tasmanian forest in February 2013, a significant victory for her cause and other environmental groups in Tasmania that had been fighting against deforestation for decades.

5. Sycamore trees of Gezi Park and protesters from all Turkey, Taksim Square, Istanbul, Turkey, 2013

In May 2013, widespread demonstrations and civil unrest ignited in Turkey, initially to oppose an urban development plan for Istanbul's Taksim Gezi Park. The park, one of the few remaining green spaces in the city, had to make way for a shopping mall, backed by the Turkish government. Activists initially held a peaceful sit-in under the park's trees, hoping to prevent its destruction. Larger protests were triggered after the forceful eviction of a park sit-in. The police used tear gas and pressurized water to disperse the demonstrators, leading to violent clashes. Over 1,000 people were injured, and more than 3,300 were detained. The protests expanded nationwide, addressing various concerns, including freedom of the press, expression, or assembly. Social media played a crucial role, as mainstream Turkish media initially downplayed the protests. Nearly 3.5 million people, roughly 4% of Turkey's population, participated in around 5,000 demonstrations, resulting in 22 fatalities and over 8,000 injuries, including many severe cases. The 2013 protests temporarily saved Gezi Park, but over the years the government slowly but decisively transformed the urban landscape around it.

Beyond the political dimension, the significance of the 600 sycamore trees (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) in Gezi Park, was meaningful for the protests. Sycamore trees hold cultural and religious importance in southeast Europe and the Middle East, deeply intertwined with traditional tales and the ancient histories.

6. Hambach forest and the protesters, Hambach forest, Germany, 2012- 2020

The Hambach Forest, an ancient woodland in Germany, became the epicenter of a battle between environmentalists and RWE, a German energy company. The forest was occupied by protesters for six years, as its fate hung in the balance. Nestled within the Rhenish Lignite Mining Area, the Hambach surface mine stood as Germany's largest open-pit mining site in 2018. RWE AG was armed with an official permit to clear forest for brown coal mining since the 1960s, despite its ecological significance. Hambach Forest had thrived undisturbed for 12,000 years, making it a unique European ecosystem.

Protesters were determined to halt deforestation, erecting over 60 elaborate treehouses, some reaching heights of 20 feet (6m). They declared their decentralized nature, more a collective of individuals than a single organization. The activists stressed that even if the forest were replanted, its ecological value would be forever lost if RWE persisted in clearing. RWE and parts of the German government championed the economic importance of brown coal for energy independence, while scientists underscored the forest's value in its pristine state. As coal power is highly carbon intensive, Hambach Forest rapidly became a symbol of the battle against climate change and nature's economic exploitation.

In September 2018, police initiated an operation to remove over fifty treehouses from Hambach Forest due to fire safety concerns. During the eviction, journalist Steffen Meyn fell to his death while documenting the events. This temporarily halted the eviction, but it resumed shortly after, resulting in the destruction of all treehouses by October 2018. Simultaneously, a massive "Save the forest – Stop coal!" demonstration unfolded near Hambach Forest, drawing nearly 50,000 participants. In January 2020, the preservation of Hambach Forest was secured by government, leading to the passage of the "Roadmap for Coal Phase-out" law. In 2021, a Cologne court declared the previous eviction illegal, citing the false use of fire protection as a pretext for dismantling the protest camp.

7. Jatoba tree, Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB), Brasilia, Brazil, 2021

Indigenous activists from the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB) made a symbolic protest next to Norway's embassy in Brasilia, seeking "refugee" status for the Jatoba tree, which faces the destruction of the Amazon rainforest. APIB leader Sonia Guajajara emphasized the urgency of saving the trees and ecosystem of Amazon, pointing out that Norway is the first country to commit to no longer using any products that contribute to deforestation. The protest coincided with Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro defending his government's stance on deforestation at the United Nations General Assembly, where he received criticism for increased deforestation under his leadership.

The Norwegian embassy in Brasilia welcomed the protesters and allowed the Jatoba tree to be planted on embassy grounds. The Jatoba, sometimes referred to as Brazilian Cherry, grows in the Amazon and other forests of South America. The sap of the tall canopy tree is used for medicinal purposes by indigenous people.

APIB leader Sonia Guajajara read a letter pleading for Norway to save the amazonian tree and

therefore its forest: “This plea is a cry for the life of all living beings threatened by a corrupted and outdated vision of interaction between humans and nature”. She called for a boycott of products that contribute to deforestation in Brazil: “Today the Amazon has become a war zone; 90% of the deforestation is illegal“.

8. Queen Camel oak and the protesters, Somerset, England, 2021

Protesters in Somerset were occupying an ancient oak tree, known as the 'Queen Camel oak', and the surrounding area, to prevent its removal for a £250 million road expansion project that included a new slip road. The A303 road expansion project was realized by National Highways and it even threatened the integrity of Stonehenge as an archaeological site. Protesters, including Extinction Rebellion and with the presence of BBC presenter Chris Packham, were camping around the tree to convince National Highways to relocate the slip road instead. They appealed to the High Court, but their efforts were unsuccessful.

National Highways estimated the tree's age at around 400-450 years old and claimed it was not protected by any orders. Protesters argued that the tree had historical significance and were calling for its preservation, emphasizing the importance of protecting biodiversity.

A petition to save the tree on the campaigning site Change.org attracted more than 37,000 signatures.

Despite the protesters best efforts, along a petition and lobbying from local parliamentary candidates, the tree was cut down— an act described by the protesters as “needless construction ploughing indiscriminately through precious nature.”

9. Climate activists and trees of Lützerath hamlet (Lützerath lebt), Lützerath, Germany, from 2020 to 2023

Lützerath and surrounding villages have been in the spotlight of climate activism since at least 2013 when Germany's constitutional court ruled that the extension of the Garzweiler opencast brown coalmine was in the public interest.

Since 2020, activists have been occupying Lützerath, opposing its eviction by energy company RWE, which aims to extract lignite beneath the village. "Lützi" has become a symbol of the climate movement in Germany. In order to block the mine's advance, between 50 and 100 activists, depending on the season, have permanently occupied the village. They have set up camp on Eckardt Heukamp's land, the last farmer to have refused to leave his parents' fertile land. Most original residents received compensation and resettled over the past decade. The activists built structures and treehouses, a community kitchen, serving over 1,000 meals daily from donated food. Germany planned the coal phase-out in North Rhine-Westphalia only in 2030 with the company agreeing to save five villages planned for demolition but destroy Lützerath. This will still give it access to about 280m tonnes of coal. Activists argued it jeopardizes Germany's Paris agreement climate targets.

As the eviction began in January 2023, hundreds of police units entered Lützerath, dismantling treehouses and removing activists. Some protesters resisted. Police destroyed the barricades and asked people to leave, with some forming human chains or taking refuge in treehouses and rooftops. Over 1,000 police officers participated in the operation. The whole Lützerath camp was cleared out, however the utopian experiment of grassroots democratic and self-governing infrastructures might not be forgotten.

10. Local activists and Appalachian forests, Mountain Valley Pipeline protest, Virginia, West Virginia, USA, 2023

In the heart of the Appalachian hills, activists, primarily women, staged non-violent environmental protests against the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP), which threatened their community. The pipeline, spanning 303 miles (488 km), was made to carry fracked gas from northern West Virginia to Virginia. Two tree-sits, platforms anchored high above the ground, had endured for 932 days, obstructing MVP's construction. A woman named Nutty spent a record-breaking 57 days atop a 50ft pole to protest a fracked natural-gas pipeline's construction. The activists feared the pipeline's environmental consequences, such as water contamination and explosion risks. But an injunction prompted law enforcement to remove the base camp, leaving two tree-sitters behind.

On March 23 2023, police and work crews aimed to remove the tree-sitters, sparking outrage among local residents who gathered in protest. The demonstrators criticized the law for seemingly favoring corporate interests over local communities. These protests had become a recurring pattern during the three-year conflict with the MVP project, with similar confrontations occurring at various points along the pipeline's route.

In addition to environmental concerns, the activists saw the pipeline as emblematic of broader issues, such as the erosion of democracy, corporate influence, and the loss of personal agency.

Geräumte Träume, “evicted dreams, “ is a pun in German. The destruction of the occupation of Lützerath clears the way for the fossil fuel industry to wreak more havoc on the climate, but this place was also a partially realized effort to create an alternative model showing what life could be without the violence of police and the pressure to compete within capitalism. In that regard, the eviction also represents an attack on an attempt to demonstrate the virtues of a life free of domination.