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Message from the Chair

Each spring, the section leaders prepare for two major events: section elections and the ASA conference itself. You will be receiving a ballot soon, if you have not already, to include elections for the Chair-Elect, Secretary-Treasurer, and two council member positions. In terms of the conference, if you recall, it will be held in Denver, Colorado with the theme, “Real Utopias” from Friday, August 17 to Monday, August 20. Our section meets on Sunday, August 19. On that day, we will have a round table session followed by our business meeting. Thereafter, we will have our two regular sessions.

The ASA will be releasing the official list of papers for our sessions soon. Our session organizers Joyce Apsel, Steve Carlton-Ford, and Ryan Kelty tell me that we have an excellent set of papers planned for this year’s meetings. Joyce Apsel is organizing a session called, “Building Peace: Locally and Globally”. This session looks at a range of approaches to promoting peace within cultures and societies from the politics of peace building to education, repair and recovery, and violence prevention. The papers in this session include topics ranging from anti-capitalist protest to applied peace building. Laura J. Heideman from the University of Wisconsin-Madison will be the discussant.

Steve Carlton-Ford is organizing a session called “Military and Veterans Adjustments to Post-9/11 Wars”. Here, most of the papers focus on Veterans’ post-war adjustments to civilian life. What can we expect in terms of veterans’ mental health and job outcomes? Are there positive effects of military service on their lives? I believe that the papers in this session will answer these and many other questions among scholars and civilian leaders alike.

Finally, our roundtable session will include 21 papers across five tables. Traditionally, we have our business meeting right after the round table session, giving us only one hour to present 21 papers! We have people assigned to each table who have agreed to help ensure that the business meeting starts on time. Having been both a presenter and an observer, I can tell you that this is no easy task!

One of our next tasks for the section as we start the summer is to monitor our membership. According to ASA, memberships are down across the board. Our section has done very well in maintaining the numbers necessary for our current programming over the last several years. We need to continue this trend going into next year if we are going to maintain the robust programming like we have now. That said, please take a moment to encourage your colleagues and students to participate in section life. If you know someone who is coming to the ASA meetings, invite her or him to our section reception! I will have more information about that as we approach the meetings.

I hope that you are having a happy and productive spring!

- Dave Rohall, Chair
The Future of Occupy: From Occupying People’s Park to Changing the System
Jackie Smith, University of Pittsburgh and Bob Glidden, Occupy Pittsburgh Outreach Working Group


The closing of Occupy camps around the country has generated some important soul-searching and strategizing by activists, and in Pittsburgh feelings are divided. On the one hand, many of the camp residents are deeply saddened by the loss of their home and the dispersal of the community that had developed there. On the other hand, many other activists feel freed up to shift their energies and attentions away from the camp—and the many dramas that tended to circulate there—and towards the work of building a more diverse and long-term movement.

The camp and the community it nurtured have advanced work for social transformation in our city and beyond. But along with many of those we’ve been working with, we believe it’s time to step back and think more strategically about the way forward. While the encampment is gone, the issues that inspired us haven’t gone away, and they will only get worse unless there is a radical redistribution of wealth and power in our society.

Although many involved in the Occupy movement are new to activism, it is important to recognize that this movement didn’t begin last fall, and it didn’t begin in this country. Americans are not alone in this struggle. Residents of Greece, for instance, are out in vast numbers resisting economic policies that have reduced public services and enabled corporations to expand their influence in politics and their control of the commons. In Pittsburgh, our political leaders are doing the very same things. At a time when the economy is not producing jobs and not generating the incomes people need to survive, governments are cutting back on basic necessities like transit, education, and health care. These are the very foundations of the economy, and if we don’t support these somehow, there won’t be an economic recovery.

The Occupy Wall Street movement’s main contribution is that it has helped focus attention on the cause of the current crisis: corporate influence in politics and the emphasis on economic growth over all other social goals. Our political establishment is out of touch with the realities and needs of mainstream Americans. Most politicians don’t rely on public transit, and they can afford good health insurance and private schools for their kids. So public services aren’t a concern to them. But what they forget is that most people who do the work that sustains our economy need these services. Education is the building block of creativity and progress, so when we deprive so many people of this resource, we are undercutting our economic and social potential. This logic might sway politicians who don’t see education as a basic human right and a key to everyone’s ability to realize their human potential.

Maintaining a camp in Pittsburgh’s “People's Park” was an admirable first step in advancing our movement, but it required a lot of energy to defend. This kept many people from thinking about the long-term vision that connects to the needs of more diverse groups in our community. We missed an opportunity to highlight some of the many other “occupations” that are happening in this city and region to reclaim the commons for everyone’s use. Reclaiming space for public and non-commercial/community use involves working with different entities in the city to find indoor spaces where people can gather to discuss our shared concerns and deliberate about policy. Occupy Pittsburgh’s Outreach and Education Working Groups have been working with some great people and
organizations that are reclaiming old churches, schools, theatres, and the like to make them available for community-building rather than profit-making purposes.

For instance, we held our International Human Rights day event on December 10 at the Kingsley Center in Larimer. Our most recent teach-in was at the Community Empowerment Association in Homewood, and our “Occupy your Mind” gathering was held at the Union Project in Morningside. Future events are planned for the new, community-oriented Bricolage Theatre downtown and the Pump House in Homestead, an important site of historical labor struggle. This work has reminded us that one of the problems our democratic process has had is that we've lost these common spaces where diverse groups of people can come together to discuss the issues that affect our lives. These spaces need to be non-commercial and devoted to serving community needs rather than turning a profit. Since politicians have been so focused on economic growth, they've lost this sense of what is the essence of community and democracy—which is not something that can be measured in dollars. More importantly, their focus on economic indicators neglects future generations.

We have to remember that the people who make up this movement differ quite a bit. The limited experience of younger activists is contrasted by the energy and creativity they have shown during the movement's early phase of development. But there are many people who have been working on these issues for a very long time, and who have worked in a variety of ways to advance change. They have learned the importance of taking time to build relationships across diverse groups. The next step will be bringing these segments together and helping people understand the very different ways this system impacts people of different races, classes, gender orientations, and nationalities. As people learn more about our different experiences of exploitation, there will be greater clarity about what the system is about and what needs to be done to transform it. While we're unlikely to come up with one clear approach to bringing change, we can take steps to develop a greater sense of who “we” are together and to create better structures for communication and coordination. By working together we will gradually develop trust and a collective sense of purpose.

We also need to remember that we’ve got a strong foundation of movement knowledge on which to build. The structure of the Occupy movement resembles that of previous movements that really are a foundation for this struggle. Groups resisting the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle in 1999 adopted similar kinds of decentralized, autonomous, networked structures to OWS, and these structures have been part of movements all around the world. Activists have been building and developing these networks through the World Social Forums—which are another key foundation for the Occupy movement. The decentralized structures are in some ways shaped by our larger economic system and the organization of labor markets. They respond to the needs of the movement for many sources of leadership, innovation, and creativity as we defend the commons and challenge the many different manifestations of oppression. We can learn from earlier movements about effective ways to use these network forms to facilitate movement building.

In a short time, we've accomplished some of our goals in changing the debate and bringing attention to the problems of inequality and corporate power. But the larger challenge of changing the system remains. Some questions that should guide the work ahead include: How can we develop new kinds of relationships that build power for the 99%? Can we overcome the tendency of our movements to reproduce patriarchy and other forms of hierarchy and exclusion? How can build a society based in solidarity and mutual support to replace the corporate capitalist system based in competition and exploitation? And what lessons can we draw from past struggles?
Professor Steve Carlton-Ford, as of April 15, is officially president of the North Central Sociological Association. He has been president-elect since last April.

Call for Papers: Rapoport Center Human Rights Working Paper Series

The University of Texas Rapoport Center for Human Rights and Justice invites submissions on a rolling basis to its working paper series (WPS). The WPS is dedicated to interdisciplinary and critical dialogue around issues of international human rights law (interpretation and implementation) and discourse. The WPS is published entirely online and organized in a blog-style format, which allows authors to receive constructive feedback on their papers through comments that both the editorial board crafts upon publication and which readers can post in response on the moderated website. The series invites both fully developed research papers as well as short, thought-provoking papers on current events. Recently published papers include a timely analysis on the discourse among international bodies leading to UN Security Council resolutions concerning the violent uprisings in Libya as well as a critical discussion of the Legal Empowerment for the Poor (LEP) framework. Please visit the WPS site (http://blogs.utexas.edu/rapoportcenterwps) to read published working papers and consult submission information. Publication as a Rapoport Center Working Paper does not preclude or prejudice subsequent publication in a book or journal. Feel free to contact rcwps@law.utexas.edu for more information.

Emerald Literati Network 2012 Awards for Excellence

Eitan Alimi and Liora Norwich’s chapter entitled Learning from failures: why and how “scale shift” failed to launch – evidence from the case of the Israeli-Arab land day published in Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change (volume 31) has been chosen as an Outstanding Author Contribution Award Winner at the Literati Network Awards for Excellence 2012.

“By identifying a series of intervening variables that negatively impacted attempts to achieve scale shift in their case, Alimi and Norwich have increased our understanding of the complex ways that political opportunity structures and scale-shift interact. More generally, the authors also provide a model for how scholars can and should use negative cases to build theory in new and important ways.”.

Announcement of a new study: "Combat Commanders and Frontline Combatants: Contacts and Consequences from Washington to Petraeus."

Are you interested in the sociology of combat? T.P. Schwartz-Barcott would like input in the development of highly credible, empirically based insights and studies of military combat and combatants. Traditionally, this work includes the assembling and codifying of war stories. The goal of this project would be to synthesize empirical literature on the matter. If you would like to be more involved in this type of project, contact T.P. Schwartz-Barcott at TPSBARCOTT@gmail.edu or call 401-397-6700.

Larry Nichols (West Virginia University) is Past President of the North Central Sociological Association for 2011-12.

Dr. Nichols delivered the annual presidential address at the conference in Pittsburgh in April.

Both using and contributing to power structure research, this article presents evidence that corporate and military elites form networks and mobilize resources to influence the development of environmental policy. This influence may be achieved when elites form and utilize knowledge-shaping processes, which involve four principle exercises of power.


The goal of this article is to demonstrate that environmental sociologists cannot fully explain the relationship between humans and the natural world without theorizing a link between natural resource extraction, armed violence, and environmental degradation. The authors begin by arguing that armed violence is one of several overlapping mechanisms that provide powerful actors with the means to (a) prevail over others in conflicts over natural resources and (b) ensure that natural resources critical to industrial production and state power continue to be extracted and sold in sufficient quantities to promote capital accumulation, state power, and ecological unequal exchange.


In the long history of warfare and cultural and ethnic violence, the twentieth century was exceptional for producing institutions charged with seeking accountability or redress for grave human rights abuses, often forcing nations to confront the consequences of past atrocities. Despite this global trend toward accountability, American collective memory tends to glorify the nation’s past and elide darker episodes in the country’s history. A case study of the My Lai slayings of women, children, and elderly men by U.S. soldiers shows that memories of the event have been eliminated from or misrepresented in American textbooks and media reports, and the army’s reputation survived the episode untarnished. American media nevertheless evoked the killings at My Lai in response to the slaying of twenty-four civilian Iraqis in Haditha, during the war in Iraq. Yet, again, with virtually no criminal convictions, and none of higher ranks, this
event too is likely to be forgotten or misrepresented in American memory. In contrast, American representations of atrocities committed by foreign powers during the Balkan wars, which entailed the prosecution of ranking military and political leaders, shows the trials’ potential for creating powerful memories and for delegitimizing those actors and strategies that advanced grave violations of humanitarian law and human rights.


The Occupy Wall Street protests, Arab Spring, and ongoing political resistance in Europe builds upon a long history of transnational activism as it extends and develops new tactics for pro-democracy movements acting simultaneously around the world. In *Social Movements in the World-System*, Jackie Smith and Dawn Wiest build upon theories of social movements, global institutions, and the political economy of the world-system to uncover how institutions define the opportunities and constraints on social movements, which in turn introduce ideas and models of action that help transform social activism as well as the system itself. 

https://www.russellsage.org/publications/social-movements-world-system


The World Social Forums began in 2001 as a civil society countersummit to the World Economic Forum, an annual gathering of global corporate and political elite that shapes global economic policies. Since then the World Social Forums have become the premier focal point for a diverse array of movements and associations advancing alternative visions of globalization. This *Handbook* brings together some of the leading scholars of the WSF process from North America and Europe to offer comparative and longitudinal analyses of the WSFs. It documents and contributes to the ongoing process of reflection and learning from World Social Forum experiences and is accessible to activists, students, and scholars alike.

Join the Section on Peace, War and Social Conflict, or Renew Your Membership

If you are a member of the ASA, now is the time to consider showing your support for the work of the Section on **Peace, War and Social Conflict** by joining the section or renewing your membership. To do either online, you can go to: [https://www.e-noah.net/ASA/Login.asp](https://www.e-noah.net/ASA/Login.asp)

If you are not already a member of the American Sociological Association, and would like to join the Association and the Section, you can do so online by going to:

[https://www.e-noah.net/ASA/Profile/General.asp?S=1](https://www.e-noah.net/ASA/Profile/General.asp?S=1)

Any questions you might have regarding membership in the association can be addressed to membership@asanet.org; or you can telephone the ASA at 202-383-9005, ext. 389. Questions about membership in the section may be directed to Dan Burland at dburland@legal.umass.edu.

Section Listservs

**Section Announcement Listserv:**

Please send your announcements to any of the following officers and they can post your announcement to the listserv: Chair, Chair-Elect, Secretary-Treasurer, and immediate Past Chair. Announcements are automatically sent to all section members via email. Messages are routed via [peace_war-announce@listserv.asanet.org](mailto:peace_war-announce@listserv.asanet.org).

To be excluded from the list, email [infoservice@asanet.org](mailto:infoservice@asanet.org). A marker will be placed on your record so that your e-mail address will be excluded when the distribution list is refreshed. ASA will refresh the distribution list on a bi-monthly basis or as needed.

**Section Discussion Listserv:**

To join the section discussion listserv you must send an email as described below:

1. In the address field type in [majordomo@listserv.asanet.org](mailto:majordomo@listserv.asanet.org); leave subject field blank;
2. In the text of the message type **subscribe** [peace_war](mailto:peace_war@listserv.asanet.org)
3. Make sure there is nothing else in the message (no signature)
4. Send the message. You will receive confirmation, and an authorization key with which to confirm that you really want to join the list. Once you reply positively to that you will get a welcome message.

The section’s discussion list, at [peace_war@listserv.asanet.org](mailto:peace_war@listserv.asanet.org), unlike the section announcement list, is not “prepopulated” with e-mail addresses of section members. Individuals must subscribe.