
Environment, Technology, and Society

Newsletter of the Section on Environment and Technology

American Sociological Association

Classroom Simulations of Environmental Conflicts--A Pedagogical Note

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On the first day of my Environmental Sociology class I enter wearing a full-body toxic waste removal suit and a full-face gas mask, and begin to lecture. I hand out flyers of a mock newspaper article telling how the classroom building sits on the site of an old toxic chemical factory. The article goes on to report that all occupants of the building are being exposed to hazardous materials but that the University cannot afford to relocate all classes to other buildings. After making it clear the story is fake, we spend several minutes discussing the feelings students might experience and responses they might take after discovering the hazard. Students commonly report initial fear and anger at learning of their exposure. As a group, students report that they would take drastic measures to respond to the injustice they perceive: hold protests, sue the university, withdraw from school, hold tuition boycotts, contact the media, and mobilize parents, alumni and faculty. Their demands are stiff: for full medical and psychiatric screening and treatment, full refund of tuition, and full cleanup of the building site and the surrounding area. In half an hour, the students have effectively become a "stakeholder group" in a struggle over the cleanup of a toxic waste site.

The class as a whole goes on to identify fourteen (or so) other stakeholder groups in the likely conflict that would ensue. As a class we then consider the widely different position the university administration would be likely to take from that of the students. I then divide the class into fifteen small groups of (3-5) students and assign them to represent one stakeholder interest. Outside of class, each group considers its position and strategies, their likely strengths and weaknesses and how they relate to the other groups. They prepare formal statements over the next week and present them in the simulation/debate to the rest of the class and to the remaining students (those joining the class late), who serve as "senators" and take on the task of evaluating the presentations and proposing a solution.



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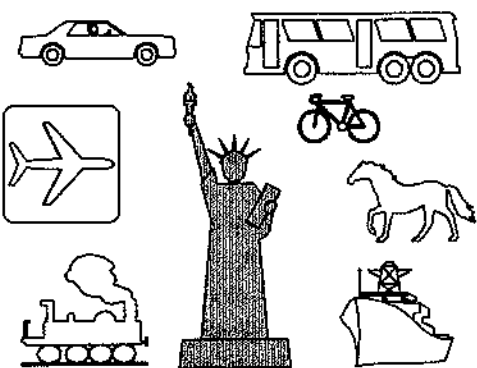
Barbara Farhar

Notes from the Editor...

Welcome to another issue of *ET&S*. This should reach you before you head out to NYC for the Annual Meetings. I hope to see everyone at the business meeting, and at the many sessions our section is sponsoring or involved in. (Several E&T sessions were listed in the Spring issue, in addition to the one listed herein.)

But the meetings are not the only topic of interest included in this issue. The cover story by Timmons Roberts provides some helpful ideas for teaching environmental sociology. Appearing as it does two issues after a piece on the same topic by Tom Rudel (see *ET&S* issue #80), perhaps it suggests that a trend has been started. If you have an article to continue this trend, please send it along for a future issue. And you might also want to check out an interesting student project on the Web. The Tragedy of the Coastal Commons homepage is located at <http://www.kenyon.edu/projects/envs61/commons.htm> and includes various perspectives on the issue and an invitation to participate in the discussion. If you have a brief note about your class projects, please send that along, too. I look forward to your input.

Also, there are several notes about member accomplishments and publications. The next issue will include reports of awards from ASA and the Annual Meetings. It is good for us all to hear about each other's activities and successes, so keep these coming, too.



Environment, Technology, and Society Newsletter

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Publication Schedule:

The deadline for submissions for the next issue will be announced at the business meeting in NYC. If at all possible, please submit text items electronically or on IBM-formatted diskette, as this greatly facilitates the newsletter production process. Articles on current research that can be represented graphically on the front page are especially sought.

ET&S is a publication of the American Sociological Association, Section on Environment and Technology. The newsletter is a member benefit.

Please note that you must be a member of the ASA in order to join a Section. Contact the American Sociological Association, Membership Services, at 1722 N Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036-2981

Bringing home the issues of environmental conflicts and sparking interest are my first priorities in teaching "Environmental Sociology." I want students to imagine themselves in the position of those social groups we are about to study in depth: people who discovered their neighborhoods, workplaces or ecosystems were contaminated,

and who often met resistance from authorities when they attempted to address the problem. Putting students in the position of contamination victims creates more acute interest in environmental justice movements, and they don't quickly dismiss the victims as "those whining and lazy minorities, women, and workers who are just looking for easy money from a class-action lawsuit or workers compensation." Second, I find that the collaborative and participatory teaching style gives students the opportunity to explore topics and gives them the satisfaction of discovery, the learning experience of working together, organizing material, and the useful practice of attempting to present it persuasively (Smith 1995). In these environmental sociology simulations, the students have the experience of imagining in-depth the likely position taken by one stakeholder group. They also get to hear the positions of other groups, identify conflicts inherent in environmental issues, and are forced to grapple with the structural advantages and disadvantages of each group. By working in small groups, students have been inspired by the efforts of other students, are forced to learn to work together, and have gotten to know some other members of the class (helping to reduce the anomie felt by many enrollees in larger universities).

Throughout the semester I break the class into small groups seven or eight times for these senate-style hearings, debates or conferences. Some of these events are more formal, involving pre-class negotiations and preparation by student groups of a formal statement of their position, which is in turn graded. Others are less formal, and are done entirely in class after a short introductory lecture and discussion with the class as a whole.

In this pedagogical note I present these eight simulations briefly. The full handouts and summaries of how each class was organized are available in our electronic archives. I share these ideas with other teachers in the hope that we can develop an ongoing dialogue about successful teaching techniques in environmental sociology and perhaps improve the standing of our subdiscipline.

I have now tried eight conflict simulations in my two years teaching Environmental Sociology. The first is Toxic Newcomb Hall/Your Classroom is Toxic, which was just described. To complement the simulation we go on to read Michael Edelstein's *Contaminated Communities*, the Cables' *Environmental Problems/Grassroots Solutions*, or Andy Szasz's *EcoPopulism*.

To learn about the breadth of the environmental movement and its factions, we read chapters from Dunlap and Mertig's *American Environmentalism* and Bob Brulle's excellent January, 1996 *Sociological Inquiry* article. Then in class we develop a list of about twenty mainstream and grassroots environmental groups. In a "Funding Pleas Simulation" I assign small groups to represent one environmental group's ideological position, its membership, and specific projects to a granting agency with five million dollars to give out. Non-presenters convene before class to decide on funding criteria and after the simulation to judge which groups merit funds. Students found they can quickly get information on their assigned environmental group by visiting the ballooning number of World Wide Web homepages of these groups.

When discussing political economy and threats that jobs will be lost if environmental protections are imposed, we simulate in class more informally a conflict between states bidding to attract Japanese investors for the siting of their Film and Plastics Company. States come up with names for themselves and bid for the potential investors with competing packages of tax breaks, regulatory relief and other programs. A series of articles refutes the hypothesis that firms seek the lowest-regulated "pollution haven" sites (a point most directly addressed by Kazis and Grossman in their book *Fear at Work*).

In a unit on workers' struggles over occupational health, we first read *Toxic Work* by Steve Fox. Next, students are assigned to groups to represent either the union or management positions in a case of a chemical company where cancers and other work-related health claims are becoming more common at times when the firm is cutting costs and increasingly using subcontracted maintenance workers. In another unit students read Foster's *The Vulnerable Planet*, and then small groups of students must decide pro or con on the question of "Can Capitalism be Reshaped to Meet the Needs of Sustainability?" Interestingly, there is often an even balance of groups debating the yes and no positions.

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In examining global environmental issues, we roughly simulate the conflict inherent at the UNCED Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 by debating "Global Environmental Change: Who Should Cut Emissions and Who Should Pay for Clean-up?" For our in-depth case study of "The Struggle over the Amazon," we identify stakeholder groups and develop a conflict simulation after reading Chico Mendes' book *Fight for the Forest* or Hecht and Cockburn's *Fate of the Forest*.

Finally, for the last day of the semester I challenge students to develop a sociologically plausible proposal for "What Would a Sustainable America Look Like?" I ask them to specifically address how they would face the tough choices (without resorting to easy technofixes) on energy resources, economic structure, urban structure, class structures and democratic institutions. They must take a position on how to coax a resistant populace, industry and government towards sustainability.

I should not say that every simulation/debate has gone perfectly, nor are they always the right pedagogical approach on a topic. Students need to be prepared with appropriate readings, lectures and videos, or they must be able to imagine their stakeholder group's position and particular dilemmas. However, by imagining a stakeholder group's position beforehand, students often approach the readings with specific questions in mind and a piqued curiosity. Students are usually gratified when the readings confirm their expectations or are surprised by interesting twists. Most are struck by the similarities which emerge in the readings and films between responses by real people facing the different kinds of environmental conflicts we simulate in the classroom.

Sprinkled in between these debates and course lectures are additional activities such as carefully-

selected videos and guest speakers who have first-hand experience and commitment working in local grassroots and mainstream environmental organizations. This year the class also conducted a random telephone survey on environmental perceptions and behaviors in New Orleans. Last year I organized an optional "Toxics Tour" of nearby hazardous sites and their communities (local environmentalists can help organize and lead the tour), and brought the class to the computer lab to demonstrate environmental resources and fora on the internet. This year I created an optional e-mail listserver for the class, so that students and I could discuss issues outside of the classroom; and I asked the students to post their discussion questions on readings to the list before class.

Student evaluations have been strongly positive on the class and on the simulations as valuable in their learning and caring about Environmental Sociology. Students have been saying they learned a lot in a class that they also enjoyed showing up for. I hope these ideas are useful to other Environmental Sociologists, and I hope other *E.T.S.* readers will pick up the ball and share what works in their classes.

☆ The planning for this class was assisted by a course development grant from the Environmental Studies program at Tulane University, funded by a Tulane/Xavier University consortium and the Department of Energy.

Reference:

Karl A. Smith. 1995. "Cooperative Learning: Effective Teamwork for Engineering Students." IEEE Education Society/ASEE Electrical Engineering Division Newsletter.

* * *

Editor's notes: contact information for Timmons is listed in the masthead on page 2.

The handouts for and further information on the activities Timmons describes may be found in the envtecsoc archives. The archives can be reached by gopher or the www. By gopher you move to USA, Colorado, Communications for a Sustainable Future (CSF), then environment subdirectory, then envtecsoc, then to his name or the July, 1996 envtecsoc archives. All postings on the listserve are archived by month. By the web, you go to the homepage at <http://csf.colorado.edu>, then link to EnvTecSoc, then to complete archives, etc.

Calls for Papers...

Organization & Environment begins publication this Fall. This new journal has been created to encourage informed discussion about the social roots and consequences of environmental problems and to stimulate deeper reflection on the meaning and significance of the natural world. Edited by John M. Jermier and Paul Shrivastava, O&E is an international forum for work that illuminates connections between the natural environment (including animals, plants, air, water, land, and other ecological entities and systems) and systems of organizing human production and consumption. It will provide critical examination of the forces driving human activities that are harmful to the natural environment and develop ideas useful in moving toward more restorative and idealized patterns of living in nature.

The first issue should appear in August. It includes articles by Carol J. Adams ("The 'mad cow' crisis and the animal industrial complex"), Ulrich Beck ("Ecological crisis and the subpolitics of resistance"), Charles Perrow ("Organizing for Environmental Destruction"), and Shirley Briggs, Rachel Carson's closest scientific collaborator ("35 years with 'Silent Spring'"). It also includes a piece on educating managers for environmental awareness by Anita Roddick, founder of the Body Shop International, more than a dozen poems by a group of creative writers from Britain called the 'Field Theory Poets,' three book reviews, and introductory comments by each member of the editorial team: John Jermier, Paul Shrivastava, John Bellamy Foster, Stephen R. Couch, Patrick D. Murphy, Linda Forbes, Laura Sells, and Kristin Shrader-Frechette.

 Sage is offering members of the Section on "Environment & Technology" of the ASA special introductory discount rates. For a limited time your individual subscription will be reduced by 20%: one-year subscription for only \$40 (reg. \$50); two-years is \$80 (reg. \$100); and three-years is \$135 (reg. \$120). All subscriptions must be paid in U.S. funds. Foreign subscriptions must add \$8.00 per year for postage, surface mail.

To subscribe contact Sage Customer Service (be sure to tell them that you are a member of ASA's Section on "Environment & Technology") at: phone (805) 499-9774; fax (805) 499-0871; by mail P.O. Box 5084, Thousand Oaks, CA 91359; or email order@sagepub.com

Organization & Environment will publish work that provides a base of scientific understanding, ethical argumentation, aesthetic appreciation, spiritual inspiration, utopian thought, and/or down-to-earth reality checks to inform and enrich discussion about environmental damage and restoration, sustainability, management, and liberation. The editors expect to review a wide range of academic research articles that make substantial empirical, theoretical, methodological, and/or philosophical contributions. Critical, interpretive, positivist, and other epistemological positions will underwrite these works, and the editors will use standards appropriate to the paradigm in evaluating the contribution of the work and in making suggestions for improvement. Work is especially encouraged that advances comprehensive frameworks (such as ecofeminism, environmental justice, and social ecology), that develops radically new ways of conceptualizing organization and environment, or that adds insight from ethical theory to the analysis of environmental issues.

In addition, work is desired that corresponds primarily with the aesthetic and futuristic mission of O&E. The journal will feature work focussed on art and the natural environment (e.g., photographic essays, narratives, poetry), and utopian imagery and futuristic thought. The purpose of these features is not only to promote critical reflection and understanding but also, in an advocacy vein, to nurture respect for nature and to inspire a sense of deeper spiritual connection and a richer range of possible alternative futures.

O&E will also feature commentaries on foundational works and citation classics, book and other media reviews, updates on and interpretations of environmental law, statements of political opinion, and discussions of activism. Contributions are desired for all these features.

Send six (6) copies of all submissions to: John M. Jermier, Co-Editor, *Organization & Environment*, College of Business, University of South Florida; Tampa, Florida 33620-5500; (813) 974-1752; fax: (813) 974-3030; Internet: jermier@cfrvm.cfr.usf.edu



Research in Community Sociology (JAI Press Series) invites papers for Volume VII. Theoretical, empirical, comparative, problem/policy-oriented, and critical studies focusing on issues related to technology, environment, and communities are welcome. Three copies of manuscripts (ASR format and style) no longer than 40 pages should be sent before November 1, 1996, to: Dan A. Chekki, University of Winnipeg, Department of Sociology, 515 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg R3B 2E9 Canada; fax: (204) 774-4134

News from the World of Technology and the Environment

"Environmentally-friendly Housing Construction--the Ekosphere®"

Ekotecture International Incorporated reached an agreement on May 11, 1996 with Florida Organics of Lacrosse, Florida, to develop the Ekotecture corporation by building a prototype Ekosphere, a 2000 sq. ft. single family home with integral food producing greenhouse, demonstrating the principles and designs of Ekose'a and Ekotecture International Incorporated. Florida Organics president, Harry Kalajian agreed to help find a CEO to head the corporation and to work as a team member to develop a business plan which will attract venture capital.

Ekotecture International is a Florida corporation, chartered for the purpose of licensing and franchising individuals, corporations, partnerships, 501-C3's, trusts, and foundations to design, build, manufacture, install, and maintain integrated natural energy environments which are powered by the universal energies of gravity, solar, and geothermal inertia.

Integrated natural energy environments or Ekospheres® are defined as self-contained, self-sufficient, solar gravity geothermal powered, non-polluting, structurally integrated, super strength, lightweight molded structures which float, enabling them to resist damage from earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes or tidal waves. They provide lights, gas, water and food, required or desired by the occupants of the structure.

On June 1, 1996, the corporation will put up a World Wide Web site, describing Ekotecture, the designs for solid state integrated natural energy environments and the related products produced and maintained by Ekotecture International Incorporated, the ecologically sustainable global utility.

For more information, contact Lee Butler at the addresses below.

Ekotecture International Incorporated, The Sustainable Global Utility
620 Biscayne Drive
West Palm Beach, Florida 33401

lbutler@emi.net

A book on the history and work of Ekotecture is also available. To Order the book Ekose'a Homes: Send check, money order, or credit card information for \$25.00 US by mail (add \$3 postage and handling) to the above address, by fax at (407) 833-6834, or by telephone at Jill's Gallery, Palm Beach, Florida (407) 833-9007.

The Environment On Line...

Reminder...Join the Environment and Technology Listserv! Send the e-mail message **sub envtecsoc yourfirstname yourlastname** to **listserv@csf.colorado.edu**.

Check out the Amazing Environmental Organization Webdirectory. This site lists many, many environmental organizations, of various persuasions. It provides a searchable index to topics and organizations, and links to many useful and informative sites. A good place to start your research... The web address is: <http://www.webdirectory.com/>

The EPA homepage is another helpful site. It's located at <http://www.epa.gov/>

Michael Meuser and Andy Szasz maintain a Web site (<http://www.cruzio.com/~meuser/EI>) that: (1) Describes their research on the geography of toxic industries in Santa Clara County, CA (San Jose; Silicon Valley); (2) provides Web connections to sources of data useful for the study of environmental inequality; and (3) offers a downloadable bibliography on Environmental Justice/Racism/Equity. They now wish to add to the page a fourth category of information -- course syllabi, so people interested can see how the topic is taught at different campuses.

If you have syllabi for courses on Environmental Justice or Environmental Racism or Environmental Inequality that you would like to share, send them to szasz@cats.ucsc.edu or meuser@cats.ucsc.edu.

Section News -- Election Results

The two new council members are: (1) Valerie Gunter of the University Of New Orleans and (2) David Sonnenfeld now at Washington State.

All four amendments to the bylaws were overwhelmingly approved. Briefly they were (1) change the chair of the distinguished award committee from the chair-elect to the secretary, and remove the one-year lag in the announcement and presentation of the award so that beginning in 1997 both announcement and award will take place simultaneously at the business meeting; (2) add the Marvin E. Olsen student award to the bylaws; (3) add the Robert Boguslaw award to the bylaws; and (4) removal of the requirement that a mailed ballot (we are in the electronic age, you know) was required of the council to approve proposed bylaw changes.

Member News...

"Environmental Sociologists Join Faculty at Washington State University"

Two environmental sociologists have been added to the faculty at Washington State University during the past year. Dorceta Taylor, formerly at Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment, accepted a position at WSU-Vancouver last Fall, where she will continue her work on environmental justice. David Sonnenfeld, who is finishing his Ph.D. at UC-Santa Cruz, has just accepted a position at WSU-Tri-Cities, where he will continue to study the political economy of environmental problems, including comparative studies on nuclear communities, and continuing work on industry and environment in Southeast Asia. While stationed at branch campuses, Taylor and Sonnenfeld are members of the Pullman faculty and will participate fully in WSU's graduate program in environmental sociology. Taylor's base in the Portland-Vancouver area will provide opportunities for WSU students to investigate issues such as environmental justice in an urban setting, while Sonnenfeld's base in the Tri-Cities will facilitate research opportunities at the nearby Hanford Nuclear Reservation.

"Rosa Named First Meyer Professor at Washington State University"

Section Chair Eugene Rosa has been appointed as the First Meyer Distinguished Professor of Natural Resource and Environmental Policy at Washington State University, effective Fall, 1996. This position is part of the newly dedicated Thomas F. Foley Institute for Public Policy and Public Service. The Meyer Professorship was recently established to recognize WSU liberal arts faculty who have made "significant contributions in areas related to environmental and natural resource policy," in terms of both scholarship and public service. Rosa's appointment is in recognition of his strong record of policy-relevant research dealing with environment, energy, and risk

issues, as well as his lengthy record of public service--including two terms on the Washington State Nuclear Waste Advisory Council. The Meyer Professorship is awarded for a three-year term, and entails a salary supplement as well as funding to enhance the recipient's teaching, research, and professional activities.

"Dietz, Lutzenhiser, and Rosa Attend National Academy of Sciences Workshop on the Environment"

Section members Tom Dietz, Loren Lutzenhiser and Gene Rosa participated in a National Academy of Sciences workshop on the relationship between U.S. consumption and the environment late last Fall. Dietz is editing a collection of papers presented at the workshop. Loren Lutzenhiser reports that interest in the linkages between consumption in industrial societies and the global environment is much stronger in Europe, however. He has participated as the sole American sociologist in conferences on consumption modelling (Geneva, Oxford), culture and transport (Paris, Sussex), and sustainable consumption (Oslo) in the past nine months. He points out the irony that, while a role for the social sciences in consumption research (particularly energy consumption studies) is now widely recognized in European Union and OECD policy circles, efforts are underway in the U.S. Congress to eliminate energy efficiency and renewable energy research, and even to withdraw support for NSF's entire behavioral research program.

"Hamilton and Duncan Receive NSF Grant"

Lawrence Hamilton and Cynthia M. Duncan (University of New Hampshire), and Nicholas Flanders (Dartmouth College) have been awarded a grant under the Arctic Systems Sciences program of the National Science Foundation, for a three-year project entitled "Human Adaptation to Large-Scale Ecological Decline: A Comparative Study of Northern Atlantic Fishing Communities."

Publications...

Penelope Canan and George Pring. 1996. *SLAPPs: Getting Sued for Speaking Out*. Temple University Press. Included is a chapter dedicated to Eco-SLAPPs, the use of civil litigation to silence environmentalists.

David Sonnenfeld. 1996. "The Ghost of Wesley Vale: Environmentalists' Influence on Innovation in Australia's Pulp and Paper Industry." *Competition and Change: the Journal of Global Business and Political Economy*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Forthcoming).

Lorie Higgins and Loren Lutzenhiser. 1995. "Ceremonial Equity: Low Income Energy Assistance and the Failure of Socio-Environmental Policy." *Social Problems* 42:468-492.



The 1996 ASA Annual Meetings in New York City

Membership chair Greg Guagnano would like to collect members' books or articles that they would like to have displayed at our table during the annual meeting in NYC. Materials may be mailed to Greg at the address below, or, if time is limited, bring them to the meeting.

Greg Guagnano
Director, Northern Virginia Survey Research Laboratory
Department of Sociology & Anthropology; George Mason University
Fairfax, Virginia 22030-4444

A list of all ET&S sessions will also be available, so do stop by the table.



Watch for this session and the sessions listed in the Spring issue of *ET&S*...

SPECIAL SESSION:
"THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT OF SOCIAL CHANGE:
CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES"

Organizer and Presider: Michael Micklin, Tallahassee, FL

"Environmental Constraints on Social Change."
Jack A. Goldstone, University of California at Davis.
Discussant: Lee Freese, Washington State University

"Environmental Problems as Opportunities for Social Change: Mobilizing
Cast-Offs From the Treadmill of Production."
Allan Schnaiberg, Northwestern University,
Adam S. Weinberg, Colgate University,
and David N. Pellow, Northwestern University.
Discussant: Frederick H. Buttel, University of Wisconsin.

