

Environment, Technology, and Society

Newsletter of the Section on Environment and Technology
American Sociological Association

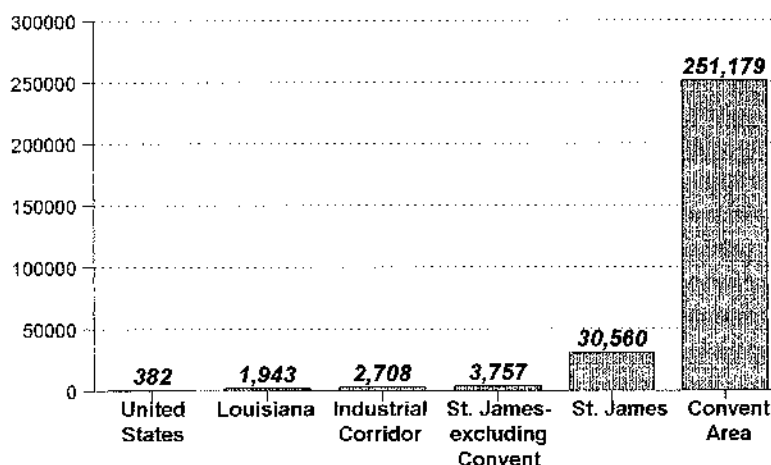
Shin-Etsu in Cancer Alley

J. Timmons Roberts

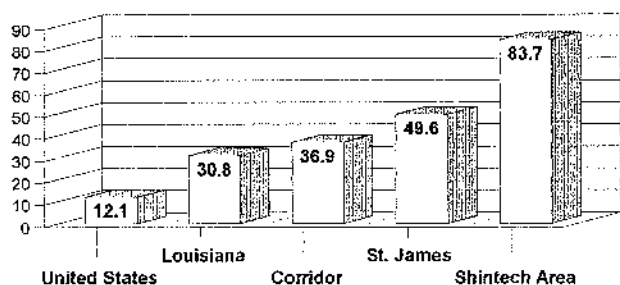
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The Shin-Etsu corporation headquartered in Tokyo, Japan, is attempting to site a \$700 million PVC plastics facility in the Convent area of St. James Parish along the Mississippi River between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The area has been called "Cancer Alley" by environmentalists, with over 100 chemical plants. Parishes (counties) in the corridor have some of the highest Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) air, water and soil emissions in the USA. The region has a long history of siting disputes and a group of local residents, called the St. James Citizens for Jobs and the Environment have opposed the Shintech plant and requested legal assistance from the Tulane University Environmental Law Clinic. The Clinic and citizens' group pressured EPA which overturned initial permits granted by the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, and the EPA has made Shintech its leading "test case" of how to put President Clinton's 1994 Executive Order on Environmental Justice into practice. These figures, provided by Bob Kuehn and the Tulane Environmental Law Clinic, compare

Pounds of Air Toxics Released Per Square Mile Per Year (1995)



Percentage African American



1990 census figures on percent African-American in various populations with reported 1995 TRI emissions per capita for the same areas. The Clinic presented the figures to EPA and the United Church of Christ's Emergency Commission on Environmental Justice this year to make the case that Title VI of the Civil Rights Act* is being violated by the Shintech siting. Industry groups and many state environmental officials around the country have been actively fighting the full application of Title VI to environmental justice cases.

*Title VI, Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d. No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

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Committee Chairs, 1997-1998

Program: Tom Rudel

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Nominations/Elections:

Valerie Gunter, Chair
Jeffrey Broadbent & Adam Weinberg

Boguslaw Award: Allan Schnaiberg

Olsen Student Paper Award:
Ken Gould, Chair
Adam Weinberg & Lori Hunter

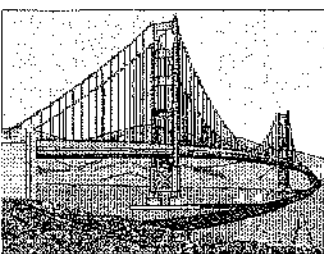
Distinguished Service Award:
Dorceta Taylor

Telecommunications Committee:
J. Timmons Roberts

Membership:

David Sonnenfeld, Chair
Mike Bell, Steve Couch,
& Steve Zavestoski

Notes from the Editor...



WELCOME to the 1998 pre-conference issue of *ET&S*. Along with the usual fare, pieces are included to help you prepare for the Annual Meetings in San Francisco. A schedule of relevant sessions and events is included on pages 7-8. Also, I've prepared a brief discussion of environmental issues and happenings in San Francisco, placed on page 3.

As we come to the close of another ASA year, our Section is again short of the number of members needed to maintain our current presence at the Annual Meetings. If you know someone who should be a member, please encourage him or her to sign up now! You could even buy a membership for someone—what a thoughtful gift! Our Section is unique in its open, friendly network. Many opportunities to grow professionally are available here as well. So, tell a friend or student about the E&T Section and help us grow! Please direct membership questions to membership chair David Sonnenfeld (address at left).

Also in this issue... The cover graphic is from Timmons Roberts, on environmental justice issues in Louisiana. In the chair's message, Tom Rudel discusses the value of policy studies for environmental sociologists. The department spotlight covers the University of Arizona. There is a book review, of *Don't Burn It Here: Grassroots Challenges to Trash Incinerators*. And, as always, member publications and activities are highlighted. Note particularly the requests for website information and papers.

For next time... As you attend sessions at the Annual Meetings, think about reviewing one (or a few) of them for the Fall issue of *ET&S*. This would help us stimulate discussion, and can be a great way for you to develop recognition in the Section. Remember, graduate students are welcome to submit pieces for *ET&S*. Note that I have moved. See my new address for submissions below.

At the conference... Chances abound to meet with old friends and make some new friends. Do be sure to attend the E&T Section reception Sunday evening. We have some special things planned! And, don't miss the Section Business Meeting Sunday morning, where our award winners will be announced. This is also the time to find out about getting more involved in the Section.

Our Section is on the Web! A portion of each newsletter is available on the Web, at <http://www.montana.edu/wwwsi/scarce/eandt.htm>. A general Section homepage is located at <http://mason.gmu.edu/nvsl/Env.html>. Both of these pages may also be accessed via the ASA-maintained E&T Section page through the official ASA site: <http://www.asanet.org>. And, as always, the ENVTECSOC electronic listserv continues to be an active (but not overburdened!) forum for all kinds of news in the world of environmental sociology and related areas. To subscribe, send an email to listserv@csf.colorado.edu with the message text: sub envtecsoc yourfirstname yourlastname.

Environment, Technology, and Society Newsletter

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Publication Schedule:

The deadline for submissions for the Fall issue is September 15. 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 20035-2981

What Do Others Think of Us?:

Natural Scientists, Environmental Sociologists, and Policy Studies

Natural scientists represent an important audience for our work because many of us work in organizations in which natural scientists predominate. Most environmental studies programs in higher education have governing boards or faculties composed primarily of natural scientists. Those of us who work in land grant universities are members of college of agriculture faculties dominated by biologists. Environmental sociologists who work in applied settings like the national labs often work as members of teams which include natural scientists. Under these circumstances it matters what natural scientists think of us because, quite frequently, they provide us with jobs, influence our chances for promotion, and, more diffusely, shape the way we think about the human dimensions of environmental phenomena.

The importance of natural scientists to our organizational lives is not easy to see when we first begin training to become sociologists. Most of us have been trained in graduate programs in sociology, and natural scientists have no presence in these programs, so one important audience never gets heard as we struggle in graduate school to define our professional identities and research areas. For this reason I thought I would use this column to outline, based on my own experience, the particular contributions that natural scientists think that we can make to the scientific enterprise.

Natural scientists usually distinguish between two types of social scientists, economists and the rest of us (anthropology, geography, political science, and sociology). In their eyes economists focus on commodities, and the rest of us have the capacity to do policy studies, if we do anything at all! Policy is important in the eyes of natural scientists because it has obvious effects on their own scientific enterprises. The political reception that a new biotechnology like the bovine growth hormone gets may influence how much it is used. Political change in the form of new legislation may provide the economic basis for toxicological research in environmental science. Ecologists see policy as one of the few tools that we have to fight the biodiversity crisis stemming from climate change and tropical deforestation. In each of these instances policy variables have a critical influence on the work that natural scientists do, and for this reason they will support the hiring of social scientists whose research focuses on policies.

Because policy research often has an important applied dimension, it may be looked on with disfavor by influential faculty in graduate programs of sociology, and students may shy away from this type of research early in their graduate student careers. This aversion to policy research strikes me as both unfortunate and unwarranted. It is unfortunate because it diminishes the chances that these sociologists will be able to compete for research positions in environmental policy. It is unwarranted because the denigration of policy research ignores the affinity between research on policies and research in political sociology. Well conceived studies of policies invoke such important and enduring concerns in 20th century macrosociology as the historical increase in state power and the emergence of the welfare state. In other words one can do research in environmental policy and still address fundamental questions in sociology. This situation may be one of those where someone, trying to do some good, does well. Because at least one important audience for our work, natural scientists, would like to see more of us doing work on a wide variety of environmental policies, graduate students in environmental sociology may improve their chances of finding employment among natural scientists if they address the political dimensions of the sociology of the environment.

Environment and Technology Happenings in San Francisco

Susan H. Roschke

In San Francisco and the Bay Area, both government and the citizenry appreciate the relationship between their society and its environment. Along with the usual complement of grassroots groups, the city of San Francisco has a Department of the Environment and an official Sustainability Plan. (Check them out at <http://www.ci.sf.ca.us/environment/>) The non-profit group Sustainable San Francisco also promotes this plan, by serving as a watchdog as well as by recognizing environmentally sensitive individuals, groups, and businesses. (See *be sure to wear...* Sustainable San Francisco's quarterly newsletter on-line at <http://www.igc.apc.org/organization/sustainable/newsletters/current.html>) At the regional level, the non-profit Urban Ecology, Inc. promotes sustainable development. The group's publication *Blueprint for a Sustainable Bay Area* won the American Planning Association's 1998 Public Education Award (Schwab and Lewis 1998). The book was selected in part because it "reaches people at both personal and regional political levels" (p. 15). Individual actions are discussed and integrated with choices at various levels of industry and government.

The area boasts numerous natural and technological recreational sites. Alcatraz is now part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The former military fort and penitentiary welcomes thousands of human visitors, while other areas of the Rock welcome a host of birdlife (Drew 1998). The Alcatraz site includes ruins of the guardhouses and remains of the gardens planted by military and prisoners' families in soil imported for that purpose. The building ruins have become overgrown and enhance the natural habitat for colonial nesting birds. Since early in this decade, when part of the island was set aside as a wildlife sanctuary, bird colonies

long established there have grown dramatically.

Golden Gate Park includes various gardens and museums, as well as trails for hiking, jogging, skating, and biking. The Japanese Tea Garden, Conservatory of Flowers, Strybing Arboretum, and the California Academy of Sciences (including a planetarium, aquarium, and natural history museum) are there. You can walk along the San Francisco shoreline through the Waterfront. If you visit here, you can walk through the Golden Gate Promenade and the Presidio, which used to belong to the military, as well as the Embarcadero, which used to be freeway. You'll also see South Beach Marina and Park, Pier 39, Fisherman's Wharf, and Ghirardelli Square.

Other notable sites include the Ansel Adams Center, featuring his wonderful photographs; the Exploratorium, with hands-on science, art, and perception exhibits; *...some flowers in your hair* (located in the Palace of Fine Arts); the walk-through waterfall at Yerba Buena Gardens; Underwater World, with its underwater acrylic tunnel; Ocean Beach; Seal Rock; the Transamerica Pyramid; the San Francisco Zoo; the Crookedest Street in the World (Lombard); the NASA Ames Research Center (ASA is organizing a tour--see the preliminary program); Muir Woods National Monument; and, of course, the bridge that "couldn't be built"--the Golden Gate Bridge (it has a pedestrian sidewalk).

References:

- Drew, Lisa. 1998. "This Prison is for the Birds," *National Wildlife*, June/July, pp. 40-45.
- Schwab, James and Megan Lewis. 1998. "Public Education," *Planning*, April, p. 15.

Member Publications and Other Recent Publications of Interest

- Becker, Steven M. 1997. "Psychosocial Assistance After Environmental Accidents: A Policy Perspective." *Environmental Health Perspectives*, 105(S6): 1557-1563. (December)
- Broadbent, Jeffrey. 1997. *Environmental Politics in Japan*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
Japan experienced rapid industrial growth after World War II, but its economic miracle brought dramatic environmental deterioration. In the early 1970s, as local protest movements grew more vocal, the Japanese government moved swiftly to regulate industrial pollution and succeeded in reducing its air and water pollution. This book analyzes the social, cultural, and political-economic causes of Japan's dramatic environmental damage and eventual partial restoration from 1955 to 1995. A case of regional heavy industrial growth and environmental protest in rural Japan provides the local details of how pro-growth and pro-environmental coalitions mobilized, struggled, and affected policy outcomes in Japan. The author uses the case-study findings to comment on sociological and political science theories about the effects of culture and social structure on state policy-making, social control, protest movement mobilization and success, and environmental problem-solving.
- Gille, Zsuzsa. 1997. "Two Pairs of Women's Boots for a Hectare of Land: Nature and the Construction of the Environmental Problem in State Socialism," *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*. 8(4): 1-21.
- Kroll-Smith, Steve and Valerie Gunter. 1998. "Legislators, Interpreters, and Disasters: The Importance of How as Well as What is a Disaster," in *What Is A Disaster?*, E.L. Quarantelli, ed. London: Routledge (pp. 160-176).
- Micklin, Michael and Dudley L. Poston, Jr., editors. 1998. *Continuities in Sociological Human Ecology*. New York: Plenum Publishing Corporation.
- Willums, Jan-Olaf with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. 1998. *The Sustainable Business Challenge: A Briefing for Tomorrow's Business Leaders*. Greenleaf Publishing.
This book is the most comprehensive and up-to-date primer available on issues of corporate sustainability and of environmental issues that affect business. Discussion is included on the implications of the Kyoto negotiations. The contributors include John Elkington (SustainAbility) and Rick Bunch (World Resources Institute) among others. All the key topics are addressed thoroughly, and the issues are viewed in context from the perspective of the fictional "SDX Corporation" as key personnel there come to terms with the policy implications of environmental issues at the dawn of the new millennium. We eavesdrop on an imagined dialogue as a large corporation questions its future, and this takes The Sustainable Business Challenge above the realm of an environmental management textbook, presenting instead the story of a corporation's search for sustainability. A final chapter takes us to 2020 and imagines what will be on the board's agenda by then.
Anyone looking for a single resource that presents all the key environmental issues as they affect business, now and into the next century, need look no further than *The Sustainable Business Challenge*. For further information, or to request a review copy, please contact Sue Pearson on +44 (0) 144 266 3789; or Fax: +44 (0) 114 267 9403 at Greenleaf Publishing; or e-mail: greenleaf@worldscope.co.uk, £12.95/\$US \$25, paperback, 192 pages, Full Colour, 250 x 176 mm. ISBN 1 874719 17 9
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Meeting Announcement

1999 Open Meeting of the Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change Research Community

June 24-26, 1999 - Shonan Village, Japan

Gene Rosa, Washington State University

An increasing number of researchers are interested in the human causes and impacts of global environmental change, as well as recognizing that local and regional scales are critical for their studies. Following two successful meetings, held in 1995 and 1997, the 1999 Open Meeting aims to promote exchanges of information on current research and teaching and to encourage networking and community building in this emerging field. The meeting, hosted by the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES, Japan), will be held in Shonan Village, an international conference center in a scenic setting south of Tokyo.

Plenary talks and commentaries on the following topics are planned: Conflict and the Environment - the interaction between conflict prevention and resolution and environmental issues; Lifestyles, Attitudes and Behavior - their role in driving global environmental change and the potential role of alternative development paths; Decision-making Processes in Response to Global Environmental Change - in particular the linkages between the international, national and local scales and the obstacles to the transfer of policy instruments and norms from one region to another; Land Use and Land Cover Change - the social dimensions of changing land use, human settlements and land cover patterns; Valuation of Ecosystem Services - current thinking on the values that can be attributed to services such as climate regulation, water supply and recreation; Demographic

Change and the Environment - the relationships between population growth and other demographic factors, for example migration, and environmental change.

In addition to plenary talks, there will be a large number of sessions devoted to the presentation of research results. The International Scientific Planning Committee welcomes the submission of abstracts for individual papers as well as proposals for entire sessions. Selection of the proposals/ abstracts will be based on quality and the need to create a coherent, balanced meeting agenda. The Committee encourages the participation of researchers from a broad range of disciplines, including researchers from developing countries and countries with economies in transition, as well as young researchers from all over the world. For these latter categories of researchers, the aim is to provide financial support for some participants whose abstracts are selected for the meeting.

For further information on the meeting, including instructions for the submission of abstracts, please consult the IGES Web Site (<http://www.iges.or.jp/>), or send an e-mail to iges-12@iges.or.jp, or mail/fax your enquiry to Mr. Yasushi Itoh, IGES Nippon Press Center Building 3rd floor, 2-2-1, Uchisaiwai-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0011, Japan (Fax: +81 3 3595 1084). The deadline for submission of abstracts is November 1, 1998.

1998 Annual Meetings of the American Sociological Association

Environment and Technology Related Sessions and Events

FRIDAY

8:30 a.m. Session 20: Technology and Society. Organizer and Presider: Frederick H. Buttel.

12:30 p.m. Session 73: Social Aspects of Risk. Organizer and Presider: Elaine Alma Draper. Discussion: Mark Suchman.

12:30 p.m. Session 74: Rural Sociology: Case Studies of Contemporary Issues. Organizer and Discussant: Paul R. Eberts; Presider: William W. Falk.

SATURDAY

8:30 a.m. Session 110. Social Research and Policy in the Circumpolar North: What Can Sociology Offer? Organizer and Presider: Carole L. Seyfrit. Panel: Carole L. Seyfrit, Fae Korsmo, Birger Poppel, and Cynthia M. Duncan.

8:30 a.m. Session 132. Refereed Roundtables on Community and Urban Sociology. Table 11: Spatial Attachment: Community and Conflict.

8:30 a.m. Session 136. Interactionist Approaches to Cultural Studies of Science, Technology, and Medicine. Organizers: Adele E. Clarke and Monica J. Casper. Presider: Monica J. Casper. Discussion: Monica J. Casper and Isabelle Baszanger.

10:30 a.m. Session 140. Science Policy and Core Issues and Opportunities in the Social Sciences. Organizer and Presider: Felice J. Levine. Panel: William Butz, NSF; Ellen Stover, NIMH; and Judith D. Auerbach, Office of Science and Technology Policy.

10:30 a.m. Session 149. Computer Technology and Social Change. Organizer: David B. Bills. Discussion: Stephen Barley.

10:30 a.m. Session 152. Food and Agriculture. Organizer and Presider: Mara Miele. Discussion: Alessandro Bonanno.

10:30 a.m. Session 164. Material Culture. Organizer, Presider, and Discussant: Thomas F. Gieryn.

12:30 p.m. Session 192. Refereed Roundtables on Science, Knowledge, and Technology. Organizer: Steven Epstein. Followed by Business Meeting.

2:30 p.m. Session 219. Environmental Issues from a Race, Gender, Class Perspective. Organizer: Glenn S. Johnson. Presider: Robert D. Bullard.

SUNDAY SECTION DAY

8:30 a.m. Session 242. Refereed Roundtables on Environment and Technology. Organizer: Thomas K. Rudel.

1. Ecological Modernization; 2. Environmental Justice; 3. Disasters; 4. The Social Construction of the Environment; 5. Human Ecology; 6. International Environmentalism. Followed by Business Meeting at 9:30 a.m.

9:30 a.m. Environment and Technology Section Award Presentations and Business Meeting. 

...schedule continued on page 8...

Environment and Technology Related ASA Sessions, continued

10:30 a.m. Session 266. Global Dimensions of the Environmental Crisis. Organizer: Thomas K. Rudel. Presider: Steven Brachin. Discussant: David Sonnenfeld.

2:30 p.m. Session 296. The Economic Sociology of the Environment. Organizer: Thomas K. Rudel. Presider: Kenneth Gould. Discussion: Loren Lutzenhiser.

4:30 p.m. Session 323. Environmentalism and the Environmental Movement. Organizer: Thomas K. Rudel. Presider: Lori Hunter. Discussion: Susan H. Roschke.



6:30 p.m. Section Reception!

Held jointly with Racial and Ethnic Minorities; Marxist Sociology; and Race, Gender, and Class.

MONDAY

8:30 a.m. Session 337. Teaching Environmental Sociology Workshop. Organizers and Presiders: Karen Krause Klundt and J. Timmons Roberts. Panel: J. Timmons Roberts, Susan H. Roschke, and F. Kurt Gylke.

8:30 a.m. Session 341. Disasters. Organizer: Brenda Phillips. Presider: David M. Neal.

8:30 a.m. Session 344. Environmental Politics: Global, Historical, and Comparative Perspectives. Organizer: Jeffrey Broadbent. Presider: Allan Schnaiberg. Discussion: David Frank.

10:30 a.m. Session 370. Local Ecosystem Management: Politics, Organization, and Values. Organizer: Jeffrey Broadbent. Presider: Harvey Molotch. Discussion: Andrew Szasz.

10:30 a.m. Session 383. National Comparative Development and World-Systems Analysis: Alternative or Complementary Research Programs? Organizer: Giovanni Arrighi. Presider: Janet Abu-Lughod. Panel: Giovanni Arrighi, Gary Gereffi, Valentine Moghadam, and Alejandro Portes.

12:30 p.m. Session 389. Sustainable Development. Organizer: Lee Freese.

12:30 p.m. Session 413. Roundtables on Political Economy of the World System. Table 5: Science, Technology, and the Environment in the World-System. Table Presider: F. Scott Frey.

12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. Tour 10. NASA/Ames Research Center.

2:30 p.m. Session 415. Environmental Justice: Advances in Theory, Research, and Methodology. Organizer and Presider: Dorceta E. Taylor.

2:30 p.m. Session 435. The Environment and the World Economy. Organizer: J. Timmons Roberts. Discussion: Fred Buttel and Giovanni Arrighi.

4:30 p.m. Session 449. Public Environmental Concern: Conditions of Increase and Diffusion. Organizer: Jeffrey Broadbent. Discussion: Riley Dunlap.