

Environment, Technology and Society

NEWSLETTER OF THE SECTION ON ENVIRONMENT AND TECHNOLOGY OF THE AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

SPRING 2006

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Lori Peek, Chair of Teaching and Training Committee	Andrew Van Alstyne, Listserv Manager
Richard York, Chair of Publications Committee	Section Website: www.linfield.edu/soan/et/index.html

Greetings, Environment and Technology Section Members!

Although there will be more details in the Summer ETS Newsletter, I wanted to let you know that the program for the Montreal meetings is shaping up nicely. We have two Section paper sessions, "Society and Nature: Theoretical Approaches," and "Culture, Environmentalism, and Social Justice." We have an interesting variety of roundtables (look for details from Jan Meij in the summer newsletter), including a student-organized panel called "Big Questions in Environmental Sociology: Off-the-Record and Off-the-Cuff." Besides that we have a special forum on "The Future of Environmental Sociology: Looking Forward to 2026" organized by Maurie Cohen (a follow-up to last year's very successful forum on "The Death of Environmentalism"). And Ken Gould, our liaison with Sociologists Without Borders, has organized a pre-conference site tour and mini-symposium on Environmental Justice at Akwesasne, hosted by the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe. Bob Brulle recently reserved the site for our reception (and the forum) across the street from the Convention Center where the ASA meeting will be held. Our Section Day—and reception—will be August 11th, and the forum will be on Saturday afternoon, the 12th. More details later, but the point is, there should be lots of space for good dialogue, fun, and the sharing of creative ideas.

On a few other matters, thanks to Bob Edwards and Lori Hunter for some hard work organizing nominations ballots for our upcoming elections. Thanks also to all of you who have agreed to run for our many elected positions this year. Also, everyone will be receiving a brief membership survey from our Membership Committee about what you like most about membership in the Section, as well as suggestions for what might serve the membership better. Please send them your thoughts. And of course, please renew your membership today, if you haven't already. Our numbers help us to make all of the things that we care about more visible, inside and outside the ASA.

Best wishes,
Stella Čapek
Chair, Environment and Technology Section



101st Annual Meeting | August 11-14, 2006 | Palais des congrès de Montréal | Montréal, Quebec, Canada

How the U.S. Undermined an International Agreement on Chemicals Management

by Steve Zavestoski

In February, I was fortunate enough to travel to Dubai, United Arab Emirates, where the U.N.-sponsored International Conference on Chemicals Management finalized the "Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management" (SAICM), which had evolved over three years of international negotiations, into what is now known as the "Dubai Declaration." SAICM is intended to help countries minimize the environmental and human health impacts as the world becomes more and more dependent on chemicals.

My visit to the meeting was part of a larger project examining local level struggles in developing countries against polluting multinational corporations. I have not put my observations at the meeting into any analytical framework as yet. Instead, in what follows, I offer a journalistic account of some of the events surrounding the emergence of the Dubai Declaration. I intend my description to fill the void left by the U.S. media, which completely ignored the event.

Although the United Nations Environment Programme as far back as 1995 formed an expert group to identify ways to reduce risks from certain chemicals, it was not until the World Summit on Sustainable Development, in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002, that UNEP pushed forward with the "Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management." The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation called for the use and production of chemicals, by 2020, in a way that minimizes adverse effects on human health and environment. It also explicitly called for the development of SAICM by 2005.

After the goal of developing SAICM by 2005 was established in Johannesburg, a series of meetings was held, beginning with a meeting in Geneva in 2003 aimed at laying the groundwork for the SAICM process. Later, a series of "Prepcom" (Preparatory Committee) meetings was held, concluding with Prepcom-3 in Vienna in November, 2005, where the SAICM document was expected to be finalized prior to its approval at the International Conference on Chemicals Management and UNEP Global Ministerial Environment Forum in Dubai in February, 2006.

NGO participants I spoke to in Dubai, who had also attended the Vienna negotiations, reported to me that the goal of producing a consensus-based SAICM document that could be ratified in Dubai had been stymied by last-minute objections raised by the U.S. delegation. Following almost a week of negotiating, when everything appeared to be settled and the gavel

was about to drop to close the meeting, the U.S. delegation intervened. The EU tried to work out a compromise, but interpretation had ended and so many delegations had left the meeting that nothing could be agreed upon. This meant that there would be substantial work left to do at the ICCM, a meeting that was originally intended to finalize SAICM as a mere formality.

The SAICM document forwarded to the ICCM meeting consisted of the Overarching Policy Strategy (OPS), Global Plan of Action (GPA), and High Level Declaration (HLD), with brackets around the text on which no agreement had been reached. These contentious parts of the document focused on three issues: financial considerations (i.e., where money would come from, especially for developing countries, to implement SAICM); principles and approaches (the main disagreement here was over the way in which the word "precaution" would be defined); and scope (i.e., would SAICM refer broadly to all chemicals, including heavy metals, and chemicals in food and pharmaceuticals).

In all cases, the U.S. delegation, although not always acting entirely alone, led the objections to language that the vast majority of delegations preferred. I think all participants in Dubai who had also been at PrepCom-3 in Vienna fully anticipated the possibility that the disagreements were so fundamental, and the U.S. was so unwilling to compromise, that the whole SAICM process could collapse. These tensions set the stage for the negotiations that took place in Dubai.

So, how did the final Dubai Declaration come about? Almost immediately upon opening the meeting by asking for acceptance of some wording in a paragraph of the draft Overarching Policy Statement, which had been tabled at PrepCom-3 as part of a compromise, ICCM Chair Viveka Bohn fielded an objection from the U.S. delegation. The text in dispute had to do with the mention of the importance of "existing and new sources of financial support," and specific mention of multilateral funding agencies like the World Bank and Global Environment Facility.

Why would the U.S. oppose this language? Everyone else at the meeting agreed that SAICM would be meaningless without financial support for developing countries. The language did not require the U.S., or any country, to commit their own funds. It simply stated that multilateral funding agencies, which are already committed to sustainable development and poverty reduction, should consider making new sources of funding available to countries working on chemicals management since chemicals management is vital to sustainable development and poverty reduction.

Here's what the U.S. delegation said in its objection:

We look forward to a cooperative spirit and achieving a resounding success. However ... there are a number of outstanding issues. In part, my government, working with the World Bank, has rededicated itself to poverty eradication. We do not object to governments going to development agencies and asking for help with chemicals management. We believe the wording would be viewed as outside the [SAICM] mandate and would be a distraction from poverty reduction.

In other words, the main argument was that by mentioning that multilateral funding agencies should be looked to as funding sources for chemical management programs, these agencies or banks might become distracted from their goals of poverty eradication. Just minutes before, almost every speaker who opened the meeting, from Klaus Toepfer, the Executive Director of UNEP, to Suwit Wibulpolprasert, President of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety, explicitly emphasized how closely related chemicals management and poverty eradication are. Each of them framed SAICM as an important tool in the effort to reduce poverty. Yet despite this, the U.S. expressed a concern that suggested poverty eradication and chemicals management are unrelated endeavors.

In the end the U.S. won not necessarily on the validity of its argument, but because of its unwillingness to compromise. In a consensus-based process, without compromise nothing moves forward. Other delegations were forced to accept the removal of an entire paragraph discussing funding mechanisms in order for negotiations on other parts of the document to go forward.

The U.S. also balked at the use of the word "precaution" in the SAICM document. The EU has embraced the use of the "precautionary principle" in much of its environmental policymaking (e.g., in its policies on GMOs, which were recently undermined by a WTO ruling). There are two important features of the EU's understanding of "precaution" over which I think the U.S. delegation had concern. First, it is an approach that integrates human health into environmental decision-making. This means that precaution is taken where human health may be at risk. Second, the EU approach also incorporates the practice of justifying restrictions or bans on certain technologies or products, if they are suspected to have detrimental environmental and human health impacts, *even in the absence of scientific certainty*.

During negotiations, the U.S. delegation insisted on the broad and vague use of precaution as it first appeared in the Rio Declaration of 1992. Why would the U.S. oppose a more stringent use of the word "precaution?" Part of the explanation has to do with a fear that if the EU's version of the precautionary principle appeared in the Dubai Declaration, then it would supercede the weaker use of precaution in the Rio declaration and become the new defacto standard for applying precaution. Why would this be a concern? Because of a fear that the precautionary approach could be used as an unjustified barrier to international trade. The U.S. won a battle in the WTO when it challenged the EU's prohibition of genetically modified crops as a barrier to free trade. If the EU's definition of precaution made it into the final Dubai Declaration, then the EU could point to international law, rather than its own regulations, as justification for placing limits on the import of GMOs. In the end, the U.S. insisted on a provision that SAICM would not change rights and obligations under existing international agreements.

As many feared, by the conclusion of the meeting, the U.S. delegation had almost single-handedly brought the entire SAICM process to a halt. The delegation's multiple objections to various parts of the final document forced the president of the ICCM to send drafting groups off to negotiate acceptable language. These groups often worked through meals and well into the night. But by the scheduled close of the conference, there were still some problematic areas. The president put together a final document, despite unresolved issues, and asked the conference to vote on it.

I expected the U.S. delegation to be the first to object. Instead, delegations from a number of Latin American countries took the floor to explain that the compromises reflected in the proposed final draft were unacceptable. The basic complaint these countries had was that the current language provided inadequate explanations of possible funding mechanisms. For the developing countries, they argued, SAICM would be useless without the promise of funding for implementation.

A couple of NGOs also took the floor to voice similar objections. Then, as if not wanting to be left out, the U.S. delegation took the floor. Much to my surprise, they argued that the proposed final draft did not go far enough in meeting their demands. In other words, countries from the developing world were saying that the U.S.--which they never named, per U.N. rules against naming another country in a negative way--had pushed the negotiations too far away from a SAICM that they could support. At the same time, the U.S. was arguing that their demands were not yet met. How

could a Dubai Declaration emerge when views seemed so divergent?

The president asked that the meeting be extended, and through some serious negotiations coordinated by New Zealand and the EU, just after midnight on the final day a document was produced that all parties agreed to support.

As Earth Negotiations Bulletin modestly reported, "Some participants seemed satisfied with the outcome of the ICCM, calling it a 'balanced compromise,' which would help countries in their efforts to protect the environment and human health from the harmful effects of chemicals. Many were disappointed, however, arguing that it was a 'lost opportunity' to seriously tackle the world's chemicals-related problems."

Earth Negotiations Bulletin also reported, in a highly diplomatic manner that avoided finger-pointing, that "many participants expressed dismay at what they viewed as a lack of flexibility by a few delegations." The International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN), the lead environmental NGO at the meeting, sang a slightly different tune in its post-Dubai press release:

The SAICM negotiations teetered on the brink of disaster as the Bush Administration demanded sweeping concessions, rebuffed nearly all efforts to find common ground, and stood alone against over 140 countries to resist the agreement ...

... "US attempts to disrupt SAICM are particularly brazen since the greatest beneficiaries of better chemicals management are developing countries struggling to protect the health of workers, communities, and consumers in an age of global commerce," said Jack Weinberg, IPEN co-chair ...

... The final compromise narrowed SAICM's scope, came up short on long-term financing, and fudged the connection between precaution and human health. Yet IPEN still views SAICM as a critical global framework to eliminate the harms caused by chemicals.

In the end, the SAICM process resulted in the Dubai Declaration, for better or worse. Who were the winners? I think it's safe to say the winner was the chemical industry, led by its negotiating teams in the NGO community and its staunch allies in the U.S. delegation. Whether the Dubai Declaration is ultimately a win-win proposition, in which people of the world, and the developing world in particular, win along with the chemical industry, will only be revealed in time.

Core Insights on Teaching Introduction to Environmental Sociology

by Michael Agliardo

This is the first article in a series on teaching issues that will be offered by the Teaching and Training Committee.

I have been asked to provide some reflections on the teaching side of things, in particular, on the value of a good core course in environmental sociology and how to design it to serve a range of ends. Core courses may not sport the self-importance of upper division courses, but they can be the place where new horizons open up for students, where they make connections they had not thought about before.

Currently I teach intro to environmental sociology at Boston College, and since this course has grown in popularity, I have been asked to develop a "selected topics" follow-up. Environmental sociology is not (yet!) a full-fledged program here. The courses I offer count toward the sociology major, the environmental studies minor, and (in the case of the intro course) the college's core requirements. As with many environmental studies programs, this program's initial focus was and continues to be science and policy. However, the program director and the sociology department chair both appreciate how vital it is to offer engaging intro level courses to attract people to their respective disciplines, and when you link a sociological focus to a pressing contemporary concern you have a dynamic combination.

The reflections I offer here address four areas related to course development and implementation: student selection, curriculum design, approach to the material, and relevance.

As we all know too well, it matters who is sitting in the seats in front of you. Students who are there to take the course you are planning to teach are the students who will get the most out of your efforts. There is always a certain amount of sorting that goes on during the first couple of meetings of a course. However, if you have openings appear that late in the game, often the people who end up filling them are the last minute shoppers. So I jumpstart the sorting process before the class meets. Before classes start, I email registrants a link to the course website with a fuller description of the course and the syllabus. My course entails a substantial amount of work. Nothing like truth in advertising. Students who are not up for a serious course move on, making room for others who are serious. And I have a great time with the students who do take the course.

In designing the curriculum I begin with the premise that there are long-running, sophisticated debates taking place in society and that a university education does not provide the answers to those debates, but rather the resources you need to participate in them. That is one motif that runs throughout. Then as the semester unfolds we examine environmental issues from a whole range of perspectives. We cover the distinctive dimensions of modern ecological challenges, the role of economic systems, the history of the U.S. environmental movement, environmental justice, the role of culture and religion in shaping a society's environmental ethic, environmental issues in developing nations, and the relationship between democracy and ecology. If such an approach is not carefully thought out and integrated, it can seem a hodgepodge, so I am careful to constantly connect insights in each unit with those that came before. Beyond increasing the possibility that I will hit on connections relevant to just about everyone in the room, this overall approach reveals how complex and multifaceted the issues are that we face in society. Students have told me that that is one of the things they find most fascinating about this course, and appreciating this complexity will make them better participants in the myriad discussions which swirl about environmental issues.

Covering a range of topics makes it impossible to pursue any one topic in great depth. However, for grabbing students' interests the simple ideas are often the most provocative. Professionals in a field are quick to move on to issues they themselves are attempting to resolve, to the intricacies and ambiguities at the cutting edge. Treating the starting points in depth requires a shift in our own habits of mind, but the reward all around can be the gain in sophistication that asking fundamental questions can lend. And in the process, you can introduce students to the history of the key insights of a discipline.

Finally, at least once a week I bring in news articles or excerpts from websites that relate the matter we are covering. Since I began teaching this course, I have built up a reserve of articles, sometimes tracing a story as it develops. Just last week when reading the New York Times I happened to note the brief mention that Medha Patkar, an activist in India discussed in one of our readings, had been arrested. I suspected I would get a fuller article if I went to a periodical published in the U.K., and when I passed it out, the students got a kick. This person who had been little more than a name in a textbook was actually still making news today.

In part, as a result of taking an engaging intro or core course, some students indeed may opt for environmental studies or environmental sociology. However, whatever their field and future vocation, they are well served by a course that enables them to make the link with environmental issues, and to make it sociological, at that.

Environmental Sociology Graduate Programs on the Web!

In order to promote the visibility of graduate programs in environmental sociology, the Section on Environment and Technology's Teaching and Training Committee has created a web page to enable potential environmental sociology graduate students to readily locate programs that meet their interests and goals. The web page includes a list of universities that offer concentrations in environmental sociology, environmental studies, and other related programs at the master's or doctoral level. See <http://www.linfield.edu/soan/et/links.htm>.

If you are at a college or university that offers an environmental sociology or environmental studies concentration at the graduate level, please send us the following information:

1. Name of your College or University
2. URL for your Departmental Web Site
3. Degree(s) Offered – M.A. and/or Ph.D.
4. Primary Contact Person for the Environmental Sociology Concentration
5. Contact Person's Email Address

Please send the requested information to lori.peek@colostate.edu. The committee will post the information on the section's website. Thank you in advance for your help.

Teaching and Training Committee:

Lori Peek (Chair), Colorado State University
 Michael Agliardo, University of California-San Diego and Boston College
 Christine Bevc, University of Colorado-Boulder



CONTAMINATION AT AKWESASNE

"Akwesasne" is a Mohawk word meaning "Land Where The Partridge Drums", and is the name the St. Regis Mohawks have given to the 25 square mile territory known as the Saint Regis Mohawk reservation. This small community of approximately 10,000 people straddles the United States/Canada border in the far-most reaches of northern New York, and is situated along a ten-mile stretch of the St. Lawrence River. For the past twenty years, the people of this nation have been faced with industrial pollution of such magnitude that the health and safety of their families has been threatened, and their traditional way of life virtually destroyed. (Caitlin Fitz Randolph, Winds of Change, Summer, 1996)

She:kon/Greetings, I am pleased to announce that the Environment and Technology Section of the ASA and Sociologists Without Borders will be co-sponsoring the following event on August 10th, 2006, the day before the ASA meetings in Montreal.

Site Tour and Mini-Symposium on Environmental Justice at Akwesasne, hosted by the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe - Environment Division (SRMTED).

The event will include:

A boat tour of the 3 Superfund sites on the St. Lawrence Seaway adjacent to the Reservation.
A van tour of the Akwesasne Mohawk community.
Lunch on the Reservation.

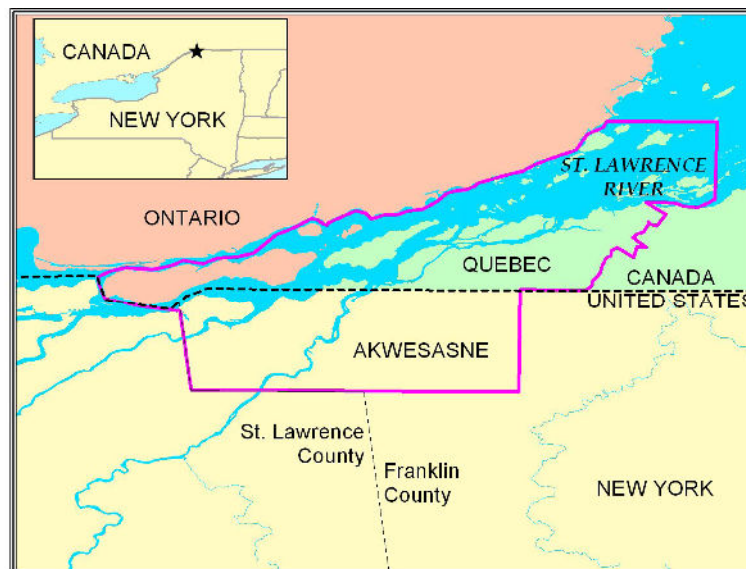
Presentations by the SRMTED addressing:

- The history of contamination.
- The history of the conflict with GM, ALCOA, Reynolds, USEPA and NY State.
- The ongoing remediation effort.
- The health, cultural and economic impacts of contamination.

A discussion of environmental justice frames and policies, and their implications for Native communities.

A van will leave from the ASA conference center for the St. Regis Mohawk Reservation at 8:00AM on August 10th, and return by 5PM. The SRMTED can host only a small group of interested participants. Those with specific expertise in environmental justice and/or Native environmental issues are especially encouraged to participate. Participants will be expected to read some materials in advance of the event at the request of the SRMTED.

If you would like to participate in this event, please contact Ken Gould (kgould@stlawu.edu).



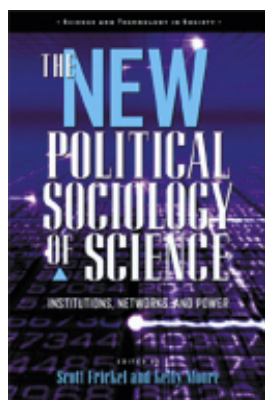
The New Political Sociology of Science: Institutions, Networks, and Power

Edited by Scott Frickel and Kelly Moore. University of Wisconsin Press, 2006, "Science and Technology in Society" series. ISBN: 0-299-21330-5, Cloth, \$60.00. <http://www.wisc.edu/wisconsinpress/books/3618.htm>

In the twenty-first century, the production and use of scientific knowledge is more regulated, commercialized, and participatory than at any other time. The stakes in understanding these changes are high for scientist and nonscientist alike: they challenge traditional ideas of intellectual work and property and have the potential to remake legal and professional boundaries and transform the practice of research. A critical examination of the structures of power and inequality these changes hinge upon, this book explores the implications for human health, democratic society, and the environment.

Contributors:

Rebecca Gasior Altman, Phil Brown, Steven Epstein, Scott Frickel, David H. Guston, Edward J. Hackett, Christopher Henke, David Hess, Maren Klawiter, Daniel Lee Kleinman, Brian Mayer, Sabrina McCormick, Kelly Moore, Rachel Morello-Frosch, Jason Owen-Smith, Jennifer Reardon, Laurel Smith-Doerr, Steven Vallas, Steven Wolf, Steve Zavestoski.



An important work that continues a movement within studies of science and technology toward more active engagement with issues of equity and social change.
—Edward J. Hackett, Arizona State University

A landmark volume in the sociology of science, a collection that signals an important turn in the orientation of the field.
—Elisabeth Clemens, University of Chicago

Environmental Reform in Asia

David Sonnenfeld, Washington State University, and Arthur P.J. Mol, Wageningen University, are co-editors of a special issue on "Environmental Reform in Asia," *The Journal of Environment and Development* 15(2), June 2006, in press. Contents include:

Environmental Reform in Asia: Comparisons, Challenges, Next Steps

David A. Sonnenfeld, Washington State University, USA; & Arthur P. J. Mol, Wageningen University, the Netherlands

Reforms for Managing Urban Environmental Infrastructure and Services in Asia

Mushtaq A. Memon, Hidefumi Imura, & Hiroaki Shirakawa, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, Japan

Environmental Reform in the Electricity Sector: China and India

Antonette D'Sa & K. V. Narasimha Murthy, Asian Regional Energy Initiative/ International Energy Initiative, India

Water Governance Reform and Catchment Management in the Mekong Region

Philip Hirsch, Australian Mekong Research Center, The University of Sydney, Australia

Transboundary Perspectives on Managing Indonesia's Fires

Judith Mayer, Arcata, California, USA

Opportunities for Environmental Management in the Mining Sector in Asia

Gill Burke, Raw Materials Group, Sweden

For further information, see the Journal's website: <http://irps.ucsd.edu/jed/>.

Publications

Buttel, Frederick H., and Kenneth A. Gould. 2005. "Global Social Movements at the Crossroads: An Investigation of Relations Between the Anti-Corporate Globalization and Environmental Movements" in *Transforming Globalization: Challenges and Opportunities in the Post 9/11 Era*. Bruce Podobnik and Thomas Reifer, editors. Brill Academic Press.

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Gould, Kenneth A., Tammy L. Lewis and J. Timmons Roberts. 2005. "Blue-Green Coalitions: Constraints and Possibilities in the Post 9-11 Political Environment" in *Transforming Globalization: Challenges and Opportunities in the Post 9/11 Era*. Bruce Podobnik and Thomas Reifer, editors. Brill Academic Press.

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York, Richard and Brett Clark. 2006. "Debunking as Positive Science: Reflections in Honor of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of Stephen Jay Gould's *The Mismeasure of Man*." *Monthly Review* 57(9): 3-15.

York, Richard and Brett Clark. 2005. "Natural History and the Nature of History." *Monthly Review* 57(7): 21-29.

Member News

Penelope Canan (University of Denver) was the campus speaker for Earth Day Week 2006 at Oklahoma State University. Her remarks were entitled " *The Carbon Management Challenge & the POETICs of Place*." She was also the 2006 recipient of the Norman L. Durham Lectureship for attracting and inspiring students to undertake environmentally responsible action in their own lives and careers. Her lecture was entitled " *Urban and Regional Carbon Management: Community Development, Decarbonized Futures, and Leadership*."

Gene Rosa has been awarded the 2005-06 Faculty Distinguished Achievement Award from the College of Liberal Arts at Washington State University.

