

# Environment, Technology, and Society



Newsletter of the Section on Environment and Technology  
American Sociological Association

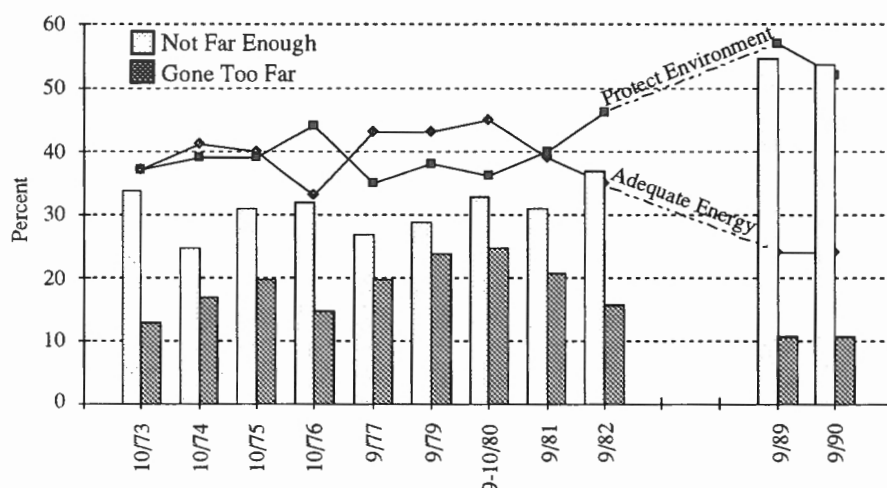
Spring 1993

Number 71

## Energy and the Environment: Public Preference Trends

**Lines:** Percent who say protecting the environment is more important than the risk of not having enough energy versus percent who say ensuring an adequate energy supply is worth taking some risks with the environment.

**Bars:** Percent who say environmental protection laws and regulations have gone too far versus those who say not far enough.



**Barbara C. Farhar**, sociologist with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, has assembled the results from secondary analysis of public opinion surveys, taken at the national and state/local levels, relevant to energy and environmental policy choices. The data base includes some 2000 items from nearly 600 separate surveys conducted between 1979 and 1992. Answers to word-for-word questions were traced over time, permitting trend analysis that identifies changes in public opinion concerning energy and the environment during the past 10 to 15 years. See page 4 for additional information.

Source: Constructed using data from the Roper Organization, as reported in Tables 2-11 and 2-26, in Farhar, Barbara C. 1993. *Trends in Public Perceptions and Preferences on Energy and Environmental Policy*. National Renewable Energy Laboratory. NREL/TP-461-4857.

## White House Forest Conference

*Editor's Note:* On April 2, 1993 the White House Forest Conference was held in Portland, Oregon. This "forest summit" was followed intensely in the northwest and received national media attention. The purpose of this conference was succinctly described by the organizers as follows: "The Forest Conference will provide a comprehensive forum for a broad and diverse range of views on the issues associated with the management of federal forest lands in the northwest and northern California. As a critical and urgently need step toward a balanced approach, it will provide the President, Vice President and members of the Cabinet with a first-hand understanding of these issues and how the people and commu-

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## Officers of the ASA Section on Environment and Technology

**Chair: Allan Schnaiberg (1991-1993)**

Phone: 708-491-3202

FAX: 708-491-9907

**Chair-Elect: Penelope Canan (1991-1993)**

Phone: 303-871-2049

FAX: 303-871-2090

**Secretary-Treasurer: Kent D. Van Liere (1991-1995)**

Phone: 608-232-2800

FAX: 608-232-2858

### Council Members

**Wendy Nelson Espeland (1992-1995)**

Phone: 708-467-1252

**Barbara Farhar (1990-1993)**

Phone: 202-484-1090

**Ken Gould (1992-1995)**

Phone: 315-379-5395

**Shirley Laska (1991-1994)**

Phone: 504-286-6472

**Eugene Rosa (1990-1993)**

Phone: 509-335-4621

**Willhelm Van Vliet (1991-1994)**

Phone: 303-492-7711

### Committee Chairs, 1992-1993

**Program: Allan Schnaiberg**

Phone: 708-491-3202

FAX: 708-491-9907

**Program: Penelope Canan**

Phone: 303-871-2049

FAX: 303-871-2090

**Publications: Chris Cluett**

Phone: 206-528-3333

FAX: 206-528-3552

**Nominations: Ken Gould**

Phone: 315-379-5395

FAX: 315-379-5803

**NIE Chair: Loren Lutzenhiser**

Phone: 509-335-4595

FAX: 509-335-6419

**Membership: Kurt Cylke**

Phone: 716-245-5336

FAX: 716-245-5005

**Liason Committee: William Freudenburg**

Phone: 608-263-4893

FAX: 608-262-6022

# Notes from the Editor

This edition of *ET&S* is the largest to date, in part because I have decided to include the book reviews that I have been holding on to in anticipation of a special book review publication. However, the in-flow of materials for such a publication has been too sporadic for me to feel confident both that I will have adequate material for a special edition and that I will be able to maintain a vibrant newsletter at the same time. On balance, I think that interspersing thought provoking book reviews in the regular issues of the newsletter will work out better, for now at least.

The ASA meetings in Miami are almost upon us. I have included a detailed listing of our sessions in this edition of the newsletter. The dates and times for each session are accurate as of the time of publication, but may be subject to change in the final schedule of events. The section business meeting will be held right after the close of roundtables on Sunday, August 15th., and a reception will follow the business meeting. Our organizers, under the leadership of Penelope Canan, have put together an exciting program, and we look forward to a large participation from our membership. August 15th is our Section's day, and there are several related sessions scheduled for the 16th as well. We will look forward to seeing as many of our 400 plus members as possible in attendance.

As I am putting the finishing touches on this edition of the Newsletter, I just received the

1993 ballot for our Section. Please vote and send in your ballot in time to reach the ASA teller on or before May 17, 1993 (though I am not sure you will even see this plea before that time!).

Several of the book reviews that are included in this issue are written by graduate and undergraduate sociology students. I would like to encourage all members of the section, teachers, researchers, practitioners, and students alike to submit book reviews as a way of enhancing communication throughout our Section. In addition, let your colleagues know what research you are interested in and working on. The Newsletter provides a forum to share ideas and interests, and a way of networking members together. Take advantage of the resource that the Newsletter provides. And let me have your ideas about how to make the Newsletter even more interesting, useful, and effective for our membership. I'll publish a Letters to the Editor section if there is interest. We might also be able to scan in photographs or other graphic items that will enhance the visual interest of the Newsletter. Let me know your ideas, and we will try them out.

Finally, I want to make the graphic on the front page a regular feature of each edition. Please send me information regarding your current research, data, and findings that are of interest to our Section that I can highlight with a graphic (chart, map, or whatever).

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## Environment, Technology and Society Newsletter

### Editor

Chris Cluett, Research Scientist  
Battelle Seattle Research Center  
4000 NE 41st Street  
Seattle, WA 98105-5428  
Phone: 206-528-3333  
FAX: 206-528-3552  
E-mail: cluett@battelle.org

### Page Design and Layout

Paul Zakian, Research Assistant

### Publication Schedule

The deadline for the Summer issue will be **July 1, 1993**. The objective is to try to have that issue in your hands prior to the ASA meetings in Miami.

## Testimony: Oregon Forest Conference

(continued from page 1)

ities in the region have been and will be affected." **Louise Fortmann**, Professor of Natural Resource Sociology in the Department of Forestry and Resource Management at the University of California at Berkeley presented the following testimony at the second of three roundtable discussions during the conference.

### Testimony of Louise Fortmann White House Forest Conference 2 April, 1993

President Clinton, Vice-President Gore, members of the Cabinet:

I shall address community well-being in northern California focusing on poverty, the problem of outside influence and the need for locally-based planning and management in forest-dependent communities. Let me stress that forest-dependence is not synonymous with timber-dependence. There are diverse forest-based livelihoods.

Poverty is a long-standing and persistent feature of these communities. In 1989, nearly a fifth of California forest counties had poverty rates equal to or greater than inner city rates. In the decade between 1979 and 1989 counties that had increases in the timber cut did not experience reduced poverty rates. A lesson: at least in California, large timber harvests will not automatically reduce poverty especially when profits are not reinvested in the county or community to any significant extent.

Local people are angered by outside influence on their communities. The decisions that affect the well-being of these communities are often taken or influenced by timber corporations with out-of-county or out-of-state headquarters, the staff of federal and state natural resource agencies and the urban-based staffs of national environmental organizations. These are people who are not personally affected by the adverse consequences of their decisions. They often lack detailed knowledge of the local ecosystem that local people have. They have neither local family ties nor a personal stake in the well-being of the people of the community. They tend to see their jobs in terms of uniform policy and uniform regulations.

Is there a remedy? There is. And it is consistent, Mr. President, with the respect you have shown for the intelligence of the American people.

We need healthy forest communities—communities that can take responsibility for successfully solving their own problems. We need locally-based planning processes that enable local people to develop and implement diverse policy options that take into account the social and ecological diversity of their communities. And we need state and federal policies that facilitate these processes. We need community-initiated and locality-based planning and management units that make ecological and social sense.

Locally-based management will involve local people and others of their choosing in gathering scientific evidence about local social and economic conditions and local ecosystems. It will involve community members and others meeting to establish community goals and to plan and implement actions to achieve them. We know this takes a lot of time. People need to learn to trust each other. While this process is painful and time-consuming, I know of no effective alternative to end the rancor and to return people's attention and creativity to strengthening their communities.

And it does work!! We already have successful examples of local loggers, environmentalists, business people, and ranchers cooperating in this way. Two examples from Northern California:

- The Plumas Corporation has organized ecosystem restoration and is working on an economic transition strategy.
- Trinity Alps Botanicals produces non-timber forest products for export and is developing a forest stewardship program.

The Mattole Watershed Alliance and the Westwood Concerned Citizens are two other examples. The success of these and many other community-based experiments in change tell us that facilitating local processes may well be the most important product of this conference.

Thank you very much.

## Book Reviews

The following review was prepared by **Paul Crist**, a graduate student at Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia:

Kroll-Smith, J. Stephen and Stephen Robert Couch. 1990. The Real Disaster is Above Ground: A Mine Fire and Social Conflict. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky.

Kroll-Smith and Couch examine a community's response to the chronic technological disaster that has laid siege to the town of Centralia, Pennsylvania for more than 25 years. They trace Centralia from its founding as a small anthracite mining village, subject to the unstable nature of the mining industry, to the town's demise. In the period between, they show a community that was never able to achieve the social traditions and bonds that aid a community faced with disaster.

Kroll-Smith and Couch discuss how a raging mine fire beneath the town effectively destroyed the community both inwardly and outwardly and how that consequence, with the benefit of hindsight, was not an unexpected result of the disaster. By examining the social and cultural history, they discovered a town fragmented on a community level. For over 100 years the townspeople's lives were dominated by absentee coal operators. Everything, from the mines and collieries to many of the area businesses and homes, was held by the coal operators who by virtue of their economic power controlled community decision making. Furthermore, state and federal government agencies were geographically and culturally remote from Centralia. This distance served to desensitize influential agencies from recognizing the needs and desires of a small politically weak community and in turn caused residents to view government as uncaring and insensitive.

Unlike natural disasters where communities move from order, to chaos, to the reconstitution of order, the man-made disaster of Centralia differed greatly. There was no brief period of terror followed by eventual resumption of normal activity, as in the case of a natural disaster, but protracted stress and fear that was relieved only when the people were removed from their homes. At

(continued on page 6)

# Current Events

## Publications

**Phil Brown**, Professor of Sociology at Brown University, points out that the Journal of Social Issues published a special issue on *Public Responses to Environmental Hazards*, Vol. 48, No. 4, 1992. Many of the nine articles in this issue will be of interest to the E&T Section members. They include the following: *Environmental Hazards and the Public* (Cvetkovich and Earle); *Myths of Nature - Culture and the Social Construction of Risk* (Dake); *NIMBYs and LULUs - Stalking the Syndromes* (Freudenburg and Pastor); *Predicting Homeowners' Mitigation Responses to Radon Test Data* (Weinstein and Sandman); *Characterizing Mental Models of Hazardous Processes - A Methodology and an Application to Radon* (Bostrom, Fischhoff and Morgan); *Attribution of Responsibility and Individual and Collective Coping with Environmental Threats* (Hallman and Wandersman); *Variability in the Framing of Risk Issues* (Vaughan and Seifert); *The Social Amplification of Risk - Theoretical Foundations and Empirical Applications* (Burns, Kasperson, Kasperson and Slovic); *Social Distrust as a Factor in Siting Hazardous Facilities and Communicating Risks* (Kasperson, Golding and Tuler).

**Seyfrit, Carole L. and Lawrence C. Hamilton.** 1992. *Social Impacts of Resource Development on Arctic Adolescents*. In Arctic Research of the United States. Vol. 6. (Fall): pp. 57-61. [Carole is at Old Dominion University and Lawrence is at the University of New Hampshire.]

**Barbara C. Farhar.** 1993. *Trends in Public Perceptions and Preferences on Energy and Environmental Policy*. National Renewable Energy Laboratory. NREL/TP-461-4857. This report provides an analysis of public opinion data, primarily from national probability samples, on energy/environmental issues from major national polling organizations between 1979 and 1992. The 400-page report covers energy and the environment, the Gulf war, energy institutions, energy alternatives, efficiency and renewables in buildings and transportation, coal and nuclear energy in the utility sector, and transportation policy preferences. A conclusions chapter dis-

Members of the Section on Environment and Technology are urged to submit nominations for the following awards:

- 1) The 1994 *Award for Distinguished Contribution to the Sociology of Environment and Technology* to recognize outstanding service, innovation, or publication in environmental sociology or sociology of technology.
- 2) The 1993 *Outstanding Student Paper Award*.

The date for submitting these nominations and supporting documents, includ-

ing student paper manuscripts, for consideration has been extended to June 15, 1993. Send materials to: **Penelope Canan** at the Department of Sociology, University of Denver, Denver, CO 80208-0209.



cusses what it all means. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the executive summary or the full report (while supplies last), please contact Dr. Barbara Farhar, NREL, 409 - 12th St. S.W., Washington, DC 20024-2188; (202) 484-1090.

**Gould, Ken.** 1993. *Pollution and Perception: Social Visibility and Local Environmental Political Mobilization*. forthcoming in Qualitative Sociology. (June).

**Catton, William R., Jr.** 1993. *Carrying Capacity and the Death of a Culture: A Tale of Two Autopsies*. Sociological Inquiry. Vol. 63. (May): 202-223.

**Wenner, Lambert N.** 1992. Minerals, People, and Dollars. 2nd ed. Missoula, MT: U.S. Forest Service, Northern Region. [This

volume describes the social, economic, and technological aspects of hardrock mining and fossil fuel development, and discusses the social and environmental impacts of such activities. 150 pages. Summarizes NEPA procedures. Bert Wenner, 524 Chapman St. S., Salem, OR 97306]

**Gedicks, Al.** 1993. The New Resource Wars: Native and Environmental Struggles Against Multinational Corporations. Boston: South End Press. (May).

**Gedicks, Al.** 1993. *Undermining the Third World: the Costs of the Minerals Bonanza*. In Roger Moody (Ed.) Panoscope: The Environment and Development Magazine for the 1990s. No. 35. (April): London. [Al is with the Department of Sociology, University of Wisconsin, La Crosse, WI 54601.]

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## Newsletters

**Claire W. Gilbert** reports that she is publishing a newsletter titled *Blazing Tattles*. It has focused on Kuwaiti and Iraqi oil well petroleum storage fires, and has included topics on weather, ecological and health impacts. The newsletter is being expanded to cover the effects of pollution on health, weather, and ecologies, and also non-polluting and sustainable technologies and services. Members of E&T are welcome to receive complimentary copies of *Blazing Tattles*, and are invited to contribute short

articles on the above topics of interest to both professionals and non-professionals. Claire can be reached at P.O. Box 610037, Redwood City, CA 94061-0037; (415) 306-9569; E-mail: cgilbert@netcom.com

Claire also reports that she recently published an article in a student magazine in Japan in both English and Japanese: *Environmental Illness: The Disease That Has No Name*. Jidaijin. January, 1993. Pp. 26-27.

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# Current Events

## Meetings and Presentations

The site selection committee of the *International Symposium on Society and Resource Management* is seeking a host institution for the 1996 and 1998 symposia. Each Symposium should be held between May 15 and June 15. Although the date of the meeting is open, it should extend for three to four days to accommodate potential field trips and local excursions. Scheduling over a week-end is desirable. Facility requirements include a conference auditorium for plenary sessions that will hold 800-1000 persons, 6-10 breakout rooms, several small conference rooms or classrooms, and space for at least 50 poster/exhibits. Living quarters for 400-500 persons are needed. The registration fee will be set by the host institution in consultation with the site selection committee. Organizers for the previous symposium will provide modest logistical support for the local institution. The host institution is expected to assume responsibility for mailing and publication requirements. Past symposia have been hosted by a variety of U.S. university departments. For further information, contact **Donald R. Field** at (608) 262-6968 or **Rabel J. Burdge** at (217) 333-2916. The proposal submission deadline is Sept. 1, 1993.

**Ken Gould**, Assistant Professor at St. Lawrence University, organized and presided at a session on *Social Responses to the Environmental Crisis* at the annual meetings of the Eastern Sociological Society in Boston.

**William R. Catton, Jr.** (Professor Emeritus, Washington State University) presented a paper in a session on *Theoretical Advances in Human Ecology* at the 64th annual meeting of the Pacific Sociological Association, Portland, Oregon, 2 April 1993: *Foundations of Human Ecology* (spotlighting Arthur Tansley's 1935 coinage of "ecosystem" and its subsequent distortion in sociological literature).

The National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA) will host the **Computing for the Social Sciences Conference (CSS93)** at the University of Illinois, May 18-21, 1993. NCSA recognizes the need of the social science community to expand the scope and scale of social science research

## Position Nominations

**Ken Gould**, E&T Committee Chair for nominations has submitted the following slate of nominees to the ASA. Vote and mail your completed ballot to Ken, who will tabulate the votes and file the results with the ASA. Results of the election will be announced at the Section business meeting at the ASA meetings in Miami.

### President-elect:

Tom Rudel  
Gene Rosa

### Two Council Positions:

Marilyn Aronoff  
Jeff Broadbent  
Loren Lutzenhiser  
Dorceta Taylor  
Theodore Tsoukalas

## Current Research

**Laurence L. Falk**, Professor of Sociology, and **Duane Dahlberg**, Professor of Physics are continuing their research in Electromagnetic Ecology as it relates to dairy cattle, human health and electrical equipment. In a recently completed survey of 369 Minnesota dairy farmers, correlations among cattle health, human health and electrical equipment appear to be quite high. Findings suggest that stray voltage, passing through the ground, seems to produce important health risks in cattle and humans who are mutually exposed to these stray voltages. These findings tend to challenge earlier notions that cattle were primarily affected by direct shocks from electrical equipment. Rather sources of EM energies appear to be more remote in their origins. For further information on this research, contact Laurence Falk, Department of Sociology, Concordia College, Moorehead, MN 56562.

**Mercedes Pardo**, Research Associate, Energy & Resources Group, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720, reports current research interests in the following areas:

- Theoretical bases for environmental sociology in an interdisciplinary way.
- Environmental impact assessment, social impact assessment, and risk assessment.
- Social consequences of the environmental crisis.

He also reports that he will be presenting two papers at the 13th Annual Meeting of the International Association for Impact Assessment in Shanghai, China on June 12-15, 1993. The theme is *Development and the Environment*. Mercedes' papers are: *The Social Impact of Highways and Reservoirs: Its Conceptualization in Spain*, and *Environmental Impact and Modernity: The Case of the High Speed Train in Spain*. Mercedes is currently Coordinator of the Environmental Sociology section of the National Association of Sociology in Spain (the Colegio de Políticas y Sociología). The section contributes papers to the newsletter *Boletín Informático*, conducts seminars, colloquia, lectures, and training courses. Mercedes can be reached at (510) 642-8848 or [Mpardo@garnet.berkeley.edu](mailto:Mpardo@garnet.berkeley.edu). ∞

through the use of high performance computing environments. High performance computing can provide the resources necessary to effectively address large-scale "grand challenge" problems of interest to the nation and the world. Participants will be introduced to the uses of high performance computing in terms of data collection and analysis, theory development and testing, global and social modeling, and social science visualization. Participants can attend tutorials

and seminars that will feature the latest developments in high-performance and microcomputing technology and its uses in research and in the classroom. Several speakers of national renown will address the future of high performance computing and social science research. Vendors and independent researchers will be on hand to demonstrate software and hardware of interest to the social science community. If you have questions, please call (217) 333-2888. ∞

# Book Reviews

The following review was prepared by **Lisa R. Carley**, a graduate student at Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia:

Lynge, Finn. 1992. *Arctic Wars, Animal Rights, Endangered Peoples*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.

Finn Lynge, a native Greenlander, tackles widely debated and timely issues in his book *Arctic Wars, Animal Rights, Endangered Peoples*. He explores the chasm between the culture of indigenous people and that of industrial society. Lynge dispels popular media myths concerning the rights of indigenous people, as well as the rights of animals. He is a strong advocate of the rights of indigenous peoples and at the same time supports compromise on these divisive issues.

Lynge fully explores both sides of what he calls "the seal war," "the whale war," and the trapping battle – the debate that rages between animal rights organizations and indigenous people concerning hunting and trapping. He skillfully points out that some animal rights activists place so much emphasis on sustaining the lives of animals that they overlook the importance of the lives of the indigenous people who hunt primarily for subsistence. With each side promoting such opposite views, Lynge feels that the best solution is not to embrace one or the other, but rather to compromise between the two. He expands his analysis by illustrating the multiple uses of whales to indigenous people as compared to the primarily singular use to industrial hunters. Lynge further points out that indigenous people have an enormous amount of respect for animals not only as living creatures, but as being essential to their survival as a people. Lynge's description of subsistence hunting is frank and unsettling for those not familiar with the everyday practices of indigenous people. In addressing the trapping battle, he points out that some groups call for the "humane" treatment of animals, while not recognizing the paradoxical nature of their demand, i.e. that animals are not human. Lynge points out that animals kill other animals savagely everyday in the wild and that trapping is just a continuation of this practice by humans.

Lynge also addresses environmental and animal rights organizations and their re-

sponses to the issues he presents. He shows how some of these groups want to protect animals at the expense of the indigenous people. These ethnocentric groups are trying to impose their culture on indigenous people and in the process wipe out a traditional way of life. The way Lynge demonstrates inconsistencies in the beliefs and actions of these organizations is quite insightful in that he exposes their contradictory actions. For example, in the animal kingdom large animals regularly kill smaller animals for food and that is seen as acceptable, yet when indigenous people hunt animals for food it is seen as wrong – thereby presenting a major contradiction in the ideology of these animal rights organizations.

Lynge also asserts that some animal rights organizations influence the media's report-

ing of activities and events. The resulting selective reporting biases public opinion as the public is denied access to all the facts.

Another concept that Lynge addresses is protectionism versus conservatism. Protectionism is an ideology embraced by animal rights advocates and states that no animals should be killed for any reason. Conservatism can be described as the ideology of wildlife management and is consistent with indigenous people's hunting and trapping practices. Lynge points out that people try to put these views at opposite ends of the spectrum, when actually they are just views on a continuum.

The main contribution of this book is that it challenges the reader to think about the  
(continued on page 12)

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## Real Disaster... (continued from page 3)

no time, except during the final decision to permanently evacuate, were the citizens of Centralia united. Instead, bickering among townspeople over whether there was a real threat to the community and what should be done if indeed there were a threat was the norm. So, splintered by different perceptions of the situation and no formal political or economic power to fight the fire engulfing their town, residents gave up any hope of saving their community physically or socially.

*The Real Disaster is Above Ground* sheds light on the differences between chronic technological disasters and natural disasters. Where natural disasters strike randomly and without regard for socioeconomic status, chronic technological disasters commonly occur in small towns where there is a large lower- or working-class population dependent on big corporations and extra-local government. Chronic technological disasters also cause more long-term uncertainty, that also undermines the natural reaction to unite and aid a fellow human in crisis. As in the case of Centralia, pitting neighbor against neighbor because each has different interpretations of the problem eventually destroys any communality that may exist in the community.

The strength of the book is the concise, chronological relaying of significant devel-

opments that occurred in Centralia, from the discovery of the fire to the decision to evacuate the town. Also, analysis of the splintering of the community and its subsequent inability to lobby any significant government agency to end the disaster showed how an effective disaster management policy would have avoided both the social disintegration and the physical disintegration of the town. Stylistically, the book failed to capture the emotion of the people. Perhaps more first person accounts of the emotional response by the people as in *Everything in Its Path* by Kai Erikson would have completed an otherwise thorough examination of the incident.

This could be used by professional sociologists and policy planners to gain insight into the behavior of people facing the stress of chronic technological disasters, so that future scenarios like Centralia can be avoided with prompt effective action. Because the book consists of straight text it is probably better suited as an assigned reading for students. The authors included no tables or data that would clarify which attitudes were held by whom and by how many people of the town. They did indicate how the majority felt during the crisis but a breakdown would have illustrated the point more accurately.

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# 1993 ASA Meeting Schedule

**Sunday, August 15, 1993. 8:30 a.m. to 10:20 a.m.**

**Session Title:** UNEQUAL RISKS AND UNEQUAL ACCESS TO RESOURCES: Section on Environment and Technology, and Section on Racial and Ethnic Minorities.

**Organizers:** **Penelope Canan**, University of Denver and **Rose Brewer**, University of Minnesota

**President:** **Celene Krauss**, Kean College of New Jersey

*Residence Proximity to Hazardous Waste Sites and Human Health: The Significance of Race or Socioeconomic Status?*  
**Francis O. Adeola**, Southern University

*The Demographics of Proximity to Toxic Releases: The Case of Los Angeles County*  
**Andrew Szasz**, **Michael Meuser**, **Hal Aronson**, **Hiroshi Kururai**, University of California at Santa Cruz

*The Green Face of Inequality: Uneven Exposure to Environmentally Detrimental and Risk Conditions*  
**Margarita Alario**, State University of New York at Potsdam

*Accessing Water, Channeling Power: Class, Gender, and Caste Inequalities in India's Desert*  
**Michael Goldman**, University of California at Santa Cruz

**Discussant:** **Dorcetta Taylor**, University of Michigan

**Sunday, August 15, 1993. 10:30 a.m. to 12:20 p.m.**

**Session Title:** AUTHOR MEETS CRITICS: THE ETHICAL MANAGEMENT OF GLOBAL TECHNOLOGY: Section on Environment and Technology

**Organizer and President:** **Penelope Canan**, University of Denver

**Author:** **Hardin B.C. Tibbs**, Global Business Network

**Critics:** **Craig R. Humphrey**, Pennsylvania State University  
**Lois Peters**, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute  
**Allan Schnaiberg**, Northwestern University  
**Nancy Reichman**, University of Denver  
**Stephen C. Bunker**, University of Wisconsin

**Sunday, August 15, 1993. 12:20 p.m. to 2:20 p.m.**

**Session Title:** SOCIAL THEORY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

**Organizer:** **Thomas Dietz**, George Mason University

**President:** **Valerie Gunter**, University of New Orleans

*Greening Rhetoric: Limits to Cultural Analysis and Communicative Ethics*

**Robert Brulle**, George Washington University, and **Thomas Dietz**, George Mason University

*Struggling with Human Exceptionalism: The Rise, Decline and Revitalization of Environmental Sociology*

**Riley E. Dunlap** and **William R. Catton, Jr.**, Washington State University

*Theoretical Perspectives on the Social Consequences of Climate Change*

**Carlo Jaeger**, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology

*From Risk Communication to Risk Cooperation: A Habermasian View*

**Thomas Weblar** and **Hans G. Kastenholz**, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology

**Discussant:** **Steve Kroll-Smith**, University of New Orleans

**Sunday, August 15, 1993. 2:30 p.m. to 4:20 p.m.**

**Session title:** ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF UNDERSTANDING ENVIRONMENT AND TECHNOLOGY: Section on Environment and Technology

**Organizer:** **Penelope Canan**, University of Denver

**President:** **Barbara C. Farhar**, National Renewable Energy Laboratory

*Collaboration in Inventing Technology: Globalization, Regions and Centers*

**Thomas Schott**, University of Pittsburgh

*An Event-History Analysis of Participation in the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat*

**Susan H. Roschke**, Cornell University

*Sociological Narratives: A Case for a Pragmatic Based Study of Environmental Movements*

**Adam S. Weinberg**, Northwestern University

*Research Problems in Relating Perceived Effects of Electromagnetic Fields on Animals and Humans: An Emerging Field in Environmental Studies*

**Laurence L. Falk** and **Duane Dahlberg**, Concordia College

**Discussant:** **Craig K. Harris**, Michigan State University

(continued on page 8)

# 1993 ASA Meeting Schedule (cont.)

**Sunday, August 15, 1993. 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.**

**Session Title:** REFEREED ROUNDTABLES: Section on Environment and Technology

**Organizer:** Penelope Canan, University of Denver

**Table 1:** *Language, Culture, and Nature*

**Facilitator:** Robert Brulle, George Mason University

*Language and the Environmental Movement*

**Harry R. Potter**, Purdue University

*From God to Nature to Humans: Changing Symbolic Images of Natural Hazards*

**T. Jean Blocker**, University of Tulsa

**Table 2:** *The Social Construction of Nature*

**Facilitator:** Valencia Fonseca, Washington State University

*The Social Construction of Salmon: Nature in the Making*

**Rik Scarce**, Washington State University

*Nostalgia, Ecotourism and the Social Construction of Heritage in the Coastal Zone*

**Steven Lang**, City University of New York

**Table 3:** *Environmental Attitudes*

**Facilitator:** Dora G. Lodwick, Miami University

*Environmentalists Versus Industrialists: An Examination of Conflicting Perspectives*

**Angela G. Mertig** and **Riley E. Dunlap**, Washington State University

*Social Change in Rural Areas: Adolescents, Age and Environmental Attitudes*

**Lisa R. Carley** and **Carole L. Seyfrit**, Old Dominion University

**Table 4:** *Issues in Sustainability and Economic Development*

**Facilitator:** R. Scott Frey, Kansas State University

*Environmental Property Rights: Toward a Politics of Sustainability*

**Will Wright**, University of Southern Colorado

*The Environmental Politics of Trade Liberalization*

**Frederick H. Buttel**, University of Wisconsin

**Table 5:** *Environmental Issues in Alaska*

**Facilitator:** Charles F. Cortese, University of Denver

*Social Change in Rural New Foundland: Adolescents, Gender, and Environmental Attitudes*

**Lawrence C. Hamilton**, University of New Hampshire, and **Carole L. Seyfrit**, Old Dominion University

*Offshore, Underwater Land Use and Recreation/Tourism in the Gulf of Alaska*

**Evert E. Tornfelt**, Mineral Management Services

**Table 6:** *Environmental Effects of Industrial and Military Operations*

**Facilitator:** Carlo Jaeger, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology

*Toward a Stage Model of Industrial Contamination: The Case of the Centralia Mine Fire*

**Stephen R. Couch**, The Pennsylvania State University

*Environmental Effects of the Gulf War*

**Claire W. Gilbert**, Publisher, BLAZING TATTLES

**Table 7:** *Sociological Theory and the Physical Environment*

**Facilitator:** Thomas M. Dietz, George Mason University

*Rationalization and Ecological Irrationality*

**Raymond Murphy**, University of Ottawa

*Undertheorizing the Environment in Sociology*

**Steve Kroll-Smith**, **Shirley Laska**, and **Valerie Gunter**, University of New Orleans

**Table 8:** *Methodological Issues in Environmental Sociology I*

**Facilitator:** Joyce Sterling, University of Denver

*Environmental Conflict in Comparative Contexts: Methodological Strategies for Socio-Environmental Research*

**Kenneth Gould**, St. Lawrence University

*Using Discourse Analysis to Understand How Disputants Legitimate Environmental Dispute Resolution*

**Denise H. Lach**, Battelle Seattle Research Center

**Table 9:** *Methodological Issues in Environmental Sociology II*

**Facilitator:** Kurt Cylke, State University of New York at Geneseo

*Studying the State from the Ground Up: Ethnography of a World Bank Irrigation Project in India*

**Michael Goldman**, University of California at Santa Cruz, and **Penelope Canan**, University of Denver

*Paradoxes and Contradictions: A Contextual Framework for "How I Learned to Reject Recycling"*

**Allan Schnaiberg**, Northwestern University

**Table 10:** *Public Participation in Environmental Policy Making*

**Facilitator:** Chris Cluett, Battelle Seattle Research Center

*Contradictory Approaches to Public Participation in Michigan Environmental Policy: One Step Forward and Two Steps Back*

**Marilyn Aronoff**, Michigan State University, **Susan Joel**, University of Redlands, and **Valerie Gunter**, University of New Orleans

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# 1993 ASA Meeting Schedule (cont.)

## *Stakeholder Analysis Methodologies*

**William Babiuch and Barbara C. Farhar**, National Renewable Energy Laboratory

## Table 11: *Economic Development and the Environment*

Facilitator: **Craig R. Humphrey**, Pennsylvania State University

## *The Politics of Production and Production of Nature in Silicon Valley's Electronics Industry*

**David A. Sonnenfeld**, University of California at Santa Cruz

## *Development and Labor Reallocation: Differential Effects by Type of Involvement*

**Ruth Seydlitz, Shirley Laska, and Kimberly Muse**, University of New Orleans, and **Karen L. Bishop**, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

## Table 12: *Urban Environmental Problems*

Facilitator: **Craig K. Harris**, Michigan State University

## *Methodologies for Tracking Hazardous Waste in the Urban Environment: Past and Present*

**Maria L. Santa Barbara**, University of Maryland, and **David Hake**, American Historical Association

## *The Environmental Problems in Urban Communities and the Protection of the Environment in Korea*

**Ik Ki Kim**, Dongguk University

## Table 13: *Social Impact Assessment*

Facilitator: **Gary Williams**, Argonne National Laboratory

## *The Ripple Effect of Resource Development: Ouachita Parish as a Case Study*

**Sarah Brabant**, University of Southwestern Louisiana

## *Social Impact Assessment of Unusual Delays in Implementing Plans of a Reservoir Development Project*

**Raghu N. Singh**, East Texas State University

## *Long Term Impacts of Off-Shore Oil Development in Coastal Louisiana*

**William Freudenburg**, University of Wisconsin, and **Robert Gramling**, Univ. of Southwestern Louisiana

## Table 14: *Gender and Local Environmental Concerns*

Facilitator: **Celene Krauss**, Kean College of New Jersey

## *Gender Differences in Reactions to a Hazardous Waste Burning Proposal: A Louisville Case Study*

**Kristen R. Yount**, Northern Kentucky University

## *Contributions of Feminism to Environmental Awareness*

**Kaylene Proctor**, University of Denver

## *Ecofeminism: The Environmental Hope of Feminism*

**Kristen Schledorn**, University of Denver

**Sunday, August 15, 1993. 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.**

Business Meeting: Section on Environment and Technology

**Sunday, August 15, 1993. 6:30 p.m.**

Joint Reception: Environment and Technology, and Science, Knowledge and Technology Sections.

**Monday, August 16, 1993. 10:30 a.m. to 12:20 p.m.**

Session Title: ENVIRONMENTAL DISPUTES AND POLITICAL CONFLICT

Organizer: **Thomas Dietz**, George Mason University

Presider: **Susan Joel**, University of Redlands

*The Politics of Pesticides Use: State Legitimacy in the Malathion Controversy*

**Wendy H. Dishman**, University of California at Los Angeles

*Environmentalism as a Manifestation of Ideological Conflict*

**Jim Gonzales**, University of Wisconsin at Madison

*Environmental System Company, Inc. in Arizona: Constructing the Issue of Hazardous Waste Incineration*

**Mary Clifford VanGelder**, Arizona State University

*Toxic Waste Siting and Community Response: Compromise, Conflict, Cooptation*

**Stuart H. Wright**, Lamar University, and **David Murphree**, University of Houston

Discussant: **T. Jean Blocker**, University of Tulsa

**Monday, August 16, 1993. 12:30 p.m. to 2:20 p.m.**

Session Title: ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE IN THE WORLD SYSTEM

Organizer: **Thomas Dietz**, George Mason University

Presider: **Dora Lodwick**, Miami University

*The Capitalist World Economy, Toxic Waste Dumping, and Health Risks in the Third World*

**R. Scott Frey**, Kansas State University

*Social Roots of Environmental Damage: A World-Systems Analysis of Global Warming*

**Peter Grimes**, Johns Hopkins University, and **J. Timmons Roberts**, Tulane University

*Technology, System Scale and Sustainable Social Systems in the Face of Global Environmental Change*

**Thomas K. Rudel**, Rutgers University

Discussant: **Steven R. Brechin**, Princeton University ∞

# Book Reviews

The following review was prepared by **Susan A. Burmeister**, an undergraduate student at the University of Denver:

Brown, Phil and Edwin J. Mikkelesen. 1990. No Safe Place: Toxic Waste, Leukemia, and Community Action. Los Angeles: University of California Press. ISBN# 0-520-07034-8.

This book is about two things. First, it is the story of the residents of a small town called Woburn, Massachusetts who realized in the mid 1970s that many of their children were contracting leukemia at alarming rates and who fought the corporations responsible for dumping toxic materials endangering their children. Second, it is about the dangers of toxic wastes in general and how community action can help to overcome this problem.

The central questions the authors address are the overwhelming amounts of toxic waste being dumped everyday in our country, and what kind of changes community organization can bring about. The authors begin with a description of one town that is dealing with the damaging effects of toxic waste dumping in their local community. The children of that community have contracted leukemia apparently as a direct result of toxic chemicals that have seeped into their water supply. The adults of the community have banded together and are suing the corporations that were involved in the dumping.

Next the authors tell of other communities that have gone through similar experiences and what they have done to try to stop it. They also take on "Corporate America" and its relationship to the growing problem of toxic waste dumping and its effects on the health of all living things. They say that corporate America is cheating the system and avoiding more expensive alternatives to dangerous chemicals because of the profit motive. Many corporations would rather pay fines for illegal dumping than pay to employ more environmentally sound equipment and chemicals. The government is no better. The authors believe that if more people in more communities would band together to fight this problem, we might sooner get governmental action to find a cure to environmental ills.

The argument suggests that government is slow to help out legislatively with the problem. They also are terrible listeners. The

fact that some environmental groups are applying pressure is still not enough to make the concerns seriously heard. With the Reagan administration and on through the Bush administration, environmental issues have taken a back seat as well as taken budgetary cuts.

The book is based on information collected from various local and national newspaper articles, scientific journals, New York newspapers and personal interviews with affected Woburn citizens, and official reports from government agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Energy (DOE), Department of Environmental Quality Engineering (DEQE), and the Department of Public Health (DPH). The real life accounts of what the citizens of Woburn were going through are effectively woven together with "official facts." For instance, if the EPA had problems proving that a certain chemical caused a certain disease, the author would reflect back to Woburn and how the citizens there were able to make the causal connection.

The weaknesses of this work are also its strengths. Though I like the idea of mixing facts with on-going experiences, the mix was not always clear. The authors strayed away from the central topic numerous times, and I found myself lost for a while. At times they seemed to have two different books: One about the people in Woburn, about their diseases, their struggles, their lawsuit and its outcome; and then the other about environmental facts, government, and the corporations involved. Yet their attempt to bring a national problem and a local crisis together illustrates that we can no longer sit back and ignore the facts about our depreciating environment. Specifically, our population needs to become more concerned about the location of their houses and the property upon which it stands. Moreover, given corporate and government disregard for this environmental problem, citizen action is vitally important as this book aptly demonstrates.

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**Natasha Leger**, an undergraduate student at the University of Denver, prepared the following book review:

Reich, Michael. (1991) Toxic Politics: Responding to Chemical Disasters. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 0-8014-2434-8.

This book is about power. Through the comparative study of chemical disasters in Japan, the United States (Michigan), and Italy, the author demonstrates the procedural similarities between culturally different victims in addressing issues of redress. More specifically, the comparison focuses on the power victims must acquire to obtain redress. Redress is defined as care, compensation and clean-up. Victims seek recourse through three phases: publicity, social organizations and politics. Toxic victims start out as socially marginal, and politically powerless. The road to redress requires conquering these and many other obstacles.

The three chemical disasters addressed are PCB contamination of rice-bran cooking oil in Japan, PBB contamination of cattle feed in Michigan, and dioxin contamination in Seveso, Italy. In the first half of the book, the author takes a chronological approach to describing each chemical disaster, from the causes to consequences to the aftermath. The toxic contamination differs slightly, and the cultures differ tremendously; however, the aftermath of victims' reactions and demands remains consistent.

The author asks the central question, "How do the victims of chemical disasters obtain redress?" In order to obtain redress, victims must understand the nature of political realities, and adapt to that framework. The road to redress requires the transformation of toxic contamination from a non-issue, to a public issue and then to a political issue.

The non-issue phase is characterized by denial and withdrawal, thereby enabling individuals and institutions alike to protect their interests. An issue remains quiet as long as individuals privatize their discoveries, and companies attempt to place blame elsewhere. The non-issue must be turned into a public issue.

Public recognition of disaster creates an explanation and identifies a victimizer, thus providing a focus for organization. Perception of a common enemy mobilizes people

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# Book Reviews

## Toxic Politics... (continued from page 10)

(victims) to action. Protest is a central strategy for dealing with the inequities that arise between the powerless and the powerful. Institutional disruption mobilizes the victims and forces concessions from the elite. "By creating a publicly visible disruption in some institutional sphere, victims can redefine an issue, challenge institutional legitimacy, and compel administrative action."

As the scope of the issue expands into various organizations—governments, companies, political parties, social movements, and the mass media—"a crescendo of controversy" is created, which transforms "the victims' struggle into society's conflict and turns the public issue into a political issue." An issue becomes political when the social conflict exceeds the victims' struggle, and encompasses protest by interested non-victims. Competing political interests now attempt to control the causes and solutions to the issue.

Victims do not initially seek political allies; their quest is to obtain redress and justice for the harm imposed upon them. Limited by their own organization and protest, victims have no other alternative but to expand the issue into the political domain. Political allies are needed to apply pressure upon social institutions and to influence public policy.

The analysis of the stages of obtaining redress suggests that power is the means to the end. Individual power drives collective power. Collective social power is not enough. In order to extract compensation from the elite, victims must be on the same playing field as those elites. Political allies have access to those barons. Regardless of whether victimization should be a political issue, the nature of the system demands it. Victims are forced to understand the structure of political competition, and manipulate it to their advantage.

Environmental disasters are neither moral nor ethical issues, but political issues. Organizations accused of misconduct attempt to contain the public scope of the issue, while the victims strive to expand it. Because "managers don't want to provide legitimacy for possible threats to the interest of the organization," political intervention is the only alternative for victims to obtain redress.

Michael Reich compiled his research from primary data and secondary sources. He spent a great deal of time interviewing the victims of the chemical disasters, as well as the company representatives and government officials. The research was framed by challenging the role of power, politics and justice in a modern society. The idea was to compare three culturally different societies,

affected by three different chemical disasters and prove that the victims' path to redress remains consistent. Regardless of the culture, power is the key to opening the victim's door to care, compensation and clean-up.

Reich argues that political intervention is required for victims to obtain redress. Si-  
(continued on page 15)

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The following review was prepared by Archie E. Hill, a graduate student at Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia:

Gore, Al. 1992. *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit*. New York: Plume.

*Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit* is a book that attempts to steer the reader away from preoccupation with the "now" way of thinking and into realizing the impending dangers that lay ahead with continued environmental ignorance and negligence. It serves as a textbook; it presents the principles and tools that are needed in assessing the state of the environment, benefiting the academician as well as the general public.

This book, written by now Vice-President Albert Gore, is informative and easy for the reader to follow. His descriptive style of writing is complimented by a few but effective charts and graphs as well as the scientific manner in which he presents his material, lending substantial support to his arguments.

*Earth in the Balance* illustrates, in some detail, the "strategic" threats to the environment. He discusses, for example, global warming, the increase of the earth's population, air and water pollution, deforestation, soil erosion, and recycling. He also discusses the relationship between the world climate and world civilizations, illustrating how floods, droughts and other climate changes caused by natural forces produce food shortages that incite mass migration, death, and revolution.

Unlike the first half of the book, the second half is much more ideologically based in its presentation. Gore's attempts to fuse environmental science with ideology is cumber-

some and often confusing. He accuses the Bush administration, the United States industry and other developed countries of foot dragging on the issues of the environment, paralyzing economies and destroying the earth's natural resources. Gore believes that the United States should take the lead on environmental issues because it is the only moral and ethical thing to do, for ourselves and for the future of our planet.

The reader is often required to change gears rapidly, to reach far back into what they have read before to synthesize the vast amount of information. This book may be better off as two volumes, one taking a scientific look at the environment, and the other dealing solely with the negotiations between the environment and global policy and the implications therein. Despite this minor weakness, this book, designed to make one aware of how social definitions and political forces dictate environmental policy, is an excellent resource for the environmental social scientist. Undergraduate and graduate students in a variety of social science courses will find the book easy to read with valuable notes, references and a useful index. It encourages one to examine available evidence and make rational judgments about the preservation of the environment.

*Earth in the Balance* provides the broad base of scientific knowledge that is necessary to examine the complexities of how the earth's ecosystem functions as well as understanding our place in it. Whether or not the reader agrees with his ideology or his political and social solutions to the environmental crisis, the main thrust of Gore's book is to awaken people to the complex interaction between the earth and its people. Gore's attempt to "search for ways to understand and respond to the dangerous dilemma that our civilization now faces" (p.12) is a great first step.

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# Current Events

**Tony Redpath** is editor of a special issue of *Technology Studies* on Technology and the Environment to appear in Vol. 4, 1996. *TS* is a multidisciplinary, international journal published by Walter de Gruyter, Inc. (Berlin and New York).

The issue on Technology and the Environment will provide a forum for discussion of environmental issues that arise from the implementation of specific technologies, as well as with more general concerns about the increasingly technological nature of society and the implications this has for both local and global environments. Technology includes: artifacts and hardware; technology practices including human behavior and related technology; technical phenomena; techniques or skills involving a significant technical component. Dimensions of environment include (among other things) social, economic, political and physical (both constructed and natural) aspects and issues related to: environmental disasters and crises, environmental management, local, regional or global environmental change, pollution, resource management, species diversity, endangered species/spaces preservation, species utilization, etc.

Papers should address environmental issues likely to contribute to an understanding of the proper use of technology, and of its role in society. The editors welcome papers that are critical, reflective, daring, insightful, thorough and most importantly, advance our thinking and understanding about broadly relevant technology/environmental issues. Authors are encouraged to think creatively about possible subject matter – for example:

- What are the effects of political and economic factors upon the impact of technology on the environment (regional trade agreements, political boycotts)?
- Is advanced technology inherently “dangerous” to the environment?
- Can technology be nature-saving and/or replacing (e.g., raising of fish & animals in artificial settings) or is it oppressive?
- What mechanisms exist to evaluate the impact of technology on the environment (e.g. life cycle analyses)?

- What can new technologies (e.g., in medicine and robotics) tell us about personhood, or about human ideals and how we treat the environment?
- Is it appropriate for authority to be put increasingly in the hands of “technocrats”?
- What are the proper roles of government/industry/environmental interest groups in managing the environmental impact of technology (e.g., in the development of pollution control regulations, or ecolabelling programs)?
- How should we assess the risks involved in technological innovation and proliferation?
- How can a largely non-technical public make informed decisions on complex technical issues (e.g., how can interpretation bias be separated from scientific/technical information)?
- What is the most efficient or fair assignment of rights to information, and to what degree must information be protected from unauthorized use (e.g., commercial confidentiality vs. public right to know)?
- What is the role of the environmental movement in addressing technological challenges and environmental quality, and what alternative roles might such a movement play?
- What is the present state of the environmental movement and what are its concerns regarding technology?
- Can technology (such as computers) be unecological with regard to energy drain, heat, ink on paper, materials, pollution, waste, etc.

While submissions from a diverse range of subject matters are welcomed, all papers must refer to truly technological issues. Papers should clearly illuminate environmental issues through informed examination of relevant technology or technologies. Papers should draw insights from more than one scholarly area, such as the arts, chemistry, education, engineering, humanities, medicine, management, materials science, physics, social sciences and social work. As well, a variety of theoretical frameworks and critical perspectives and theory are welcome, such as: Aristotelian; Kantian; Marx-

ist; Rawlsian; positivist; structuralist or post-structuralist; deconstructionism; literary criticism; environmental biology, science and sociology.

This special issue of *TS* will also consider Research Notes that may be replications of previous studies, brief ethnographies or other qualitative reports, reflections on research programs, empirically based comments or contradictions of other findings or conclusions, and notes describing new or innovative methods or perspectives. These notes should not be longer than 20 double-spaced typewritten pages.

The deadline for submission of papers is March 1, 1994. It is important to contact the editor for information about publication procedures and submission requirements:

Tony Redpath, Special Issue Editor  
Centre for Technology Studies  
Faculty of Management  
University of Lethbridge  
Lethbridge, Alberta  
Canada T1K 3M4  
Phone: (416) 978-4314;  
FAX: (416) 978-1462;  
E-Mail: OCMRAXR@VM.UTORONTO.CA

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## Arctic Wars... (continued from page 6)

issues presented in ways he or she may not have considered before. Lyngé offers several viewpoints and encourages the reader to integrate all the information and then decide which, if any, view to support.

This book is useful to both academicians and the general public as it addresses many sides of these highly charged topics. It is written at a level suitable for both graduate and undergraduate classes, as well as for those people interested in environmental issues and animal rights. It provides meaningful insight into several different areas while not compromising the subject matter. While Lyngé's message is not always pretty, it is accurate and needs to be heard.

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# Current Events

## Other News

**Thad Williamson**, who has a joint appointment at the National Center for Economic Alternatives and the Institute for Policy Studies, is requesting assistance in locating studies and references pertaining to comparative analysis of long term ecological trends. Thad can be reached at (202) 234-9383 x205. His address is: Fifth Floor, 1601 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20009. He writes (paraphrased) as follows:

We are doing research under a project being directed by NCEA on possible "post-socialist and post-capitalist" political-economic systems for the new century that pose the question, "What are the structural preconditions for realizing liberty, equality, democracy, and ecological rationality?" We are interested in an analysis of how reform efforts in industrialized countries have affected long-run ecological trends. Can ecological rationality or sustainability be achieved through reform measures under the current political-economic system of social democracy? Or is a major structural shift to a new system needed? What are its parameters, given the failure of the traditional alternative of socialism? Is it prudent to seek such a shift to realize ecological rationality? Our ultimate research goal is to answer these questions and share our findings with both lay and expert audiences.

We are trying to distinguish between trends that suggest:

- a) a token gain (e.g., 5% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub>)
- b) a real but isolated gain (e.g., reductions in lead)
- c) a real trend reversal (e.g., drastic reductions in CFCs, acidification of lakes, no more forest losses)
- d) no change or negative change
- e) gains, followed by negative reversals (e.g., reductions in energy use followed by increases)

In analyzing such trends we want to note the comparative record of different countries in reversing negative trends and ask whether these trends are threatening the long-range carrying capacity of these nations. Also, are new problems emerging faster than new policy can deal with them? We want to relate changes in trends with changes in

policy and treaties, as well as with such factors as technological change, economic slowdowns, and the like. We want to focus on strong examples of effective reform and ask whether such successes are isolated special cases or could plausibly be achieved in a political system such as the US, and whether the social democracies have a better record than Eastern Europe, and if so why.

We hope to address these questions on a country by country basis, rather than treat it as a global problem. We want to be able to say to the average American, this is what is or is not likely to happen to your country, your neighborhood, and your well-being in terms of ecological damage, given the likely and actual effectiveness of the reforms that are attainable under our current political and economic system.

We are seeking references that address long-term ecological trends, and their threats to carrying capacity, in Europe, the US and Japan. We are also looking for information on the politics and effectiveness of ecological reforms enacted to date in these countries. We are particularly interested in comparative evaluations of different countries' successes and failures.

**Joane Nagel and William G. Staples**, both at the University of Kansas, are the new editors of *Sociological Inquiry*, the official journal of Alpha Kappa Delta, the international Sociology honor society. They replace the current editor, Dennis L. Peck of the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa. *Sociological Inquiry* is among the oldest general sociology journals in the United States. It has been in print for more than sixty years, beginning at the University of Southern California in 1931, and is published by University of Texas Press. The new editors are interested in publishing work that reflects not only established, but also emerging themes and trends in the discipline. Authors are encouraged to submit articles to the new editors, *Sociological Inquiry*, Department of Sociology, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045. The journal office can be reached by e-mail at [SOCINQ@UKANVM](mailto:SOCINQ@UKANVM). ∞

## 1994 ASA Meetings in Los Angeles

**Theodore D. Kemper**, Professor and Chair of the ASA Section on Sociology of Emotions, invites E&T Section members to participate in a major thematic roundtable session at the 1994 ASA meetings in Los Angeles. The roundtable theme is *Infusing Social Institutions with Emotions*. This topic stems from James Coleman's 1992 presidential address (see text in ASR, February 1993) in which he proposed that new, rationally-constructed social institutions are needed to replace older, non-functioning social forms, and that sociologists should address how the new institutions can be built, for example, in education, the family, work settings, community, etc. In keeping with his theoretical bent, Coleman stressed the rational incentives that would make the new institutions effective. But the Emotions Section challenged Coleman (in a debate between him, Sally Bould and Amitai Etzioni in the Feb. 1993 Emotions Section newsletter) on the ground that social institutions don't succeed on the basis of rational incentives alone. They also must induce suitable emotions – commitment, trust, liking, hope, respect, enthusiasm, loyalty, confidence, satisfaction, and the like – in their participants. Coleman agreed and urged members of the Emotions Section to provide understandings of how the important emotional micro-foundations of macro institutions can be created. The Emotions Section is responding to the challenge, but also invites all sociologists with interests in institutional structure and performance to contribute to this topic from the unique perspective of their institutional interests. Papers, ideas for discussion topics, etc. should be submitted to Viktor Gecas, Department of Sociology, Washington State University, Pullman, WA 99164, by Dec. 31, 1993. Please join the Emotions Section in this effort to add flesh and blood to the bare bones of Coleman's important and interesting proposal.



# Perspectives

In the Autumn 1992 (No. 69) issue of *ET&S* we reported that **Thomas Webler** was doing a postdoc at the Polyproject for Risk and Safety at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich. Along with Ortwin Renn and Peter Weidemann, Tom co-organized a workshop in Morschach, Switzerland on *Novel Approaches to Public Participation in Environmental Decision Making*, funded by the Humboldt Foundation. The following article describes this workshop. See the above noted *ET&S* article (p. 11) for additional background information. (Ed.)

## Democratic Participation in the Swiss Alps

by  
Tom Webler

For five days in late June, the small town and undiscovered remote mountain resort of Morschach in the Swiss Alps became a place of lively discussion and discourse. Twenty-one scholars and practitioners of public participation from the United States, Switzerland, Germany, the United Kingdom, Hungary, Austria, and the Netherlands met to discuss one of the most pressing problems in contemporary environmental politics: How can environmental decision making be improved to provide both the protection for natural ecosystems and organisms that is so essential while also adequately reflecting the collective values and preferences of the people who must live with the results of those decisions?

Situated high above the Vierwaldstatter Lake in the central Swiss Canton of Schweiz (from which Switzerland derives its name), but below the 1,900 meter peak of Frontalpstock, Morschach is a small farming community with one modest tourist hotel. Formal workshops were held only on three of the five days and people used the time in between to take hikes to the surrounding mountains or down to the lake. These activities might well produce the most lasting results of the workshop: a network of scholars with similar interests. Walking trails together under the bright sun and blue skies surrounded by ragged mountains engenders quite a different rapport and kind of conversation than the networking that happens at conferences at large hotels under fluorescent lighting amidst the dreary sky-

scrapers of modern cities. We experienced together the nature that we abstractly discussed in the meeting room. We talked about the beauty, the plant and animal life, and the human impacts on the mountains. And we talked about those other aspects of our lives: families, interests, activities that lie almost unknown among most relationships scholars develop at conferences.

All present agreed on the fundamental principle that environmental decision making cannot be effective or legitimate if it fails to involve, in a meaningful way, the citizens who are affected by the outcomes of the decision making. Technocratic solutions are doomed to failure. Existing modes of environmental decision making with their all-too-common "symbolic" participation of public hearing often end up exasperating the conflict rather than producing satisfactory outcomes.

Attempts to develop novel mechanisms for participation encourage the organizers of the workshop—Ortwin Renn, Tom Webler, and Peter Wiedemann—to explore the promise of these novel models by making a comparative evaluation.

The following models were selected because of their promise and their present relevance:

- Citizen Advisory Committees
- Regulatory Negotiation
- American Citizen Juries
- German Planning Cells
- Dutch Study Groups
- Mediation
- Compensation
- German Citizen Initiatives

The goal of the workshop was to discuss draft chapters written by the participants (these are currently being reviewed and will be published in an edited book by Kluwer later this year). Since the proponents (sometimes the inventors) of these models must often work hard to sell them, we decided not to ask the model proponents to make a critical review. Instead, each proponent was matched with a critical reviewer whose task was to point out the limitations of the model.

To promote trans-Atlantic exchange, we always matched an American with a European.

Evaluating the capabilities of these models meant that a normative model for public participation was needed. Based on earlier work, a revised version of Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action was developed to serve as this standard. Criteria and indicators for "rational discourse" were developed by the organizers before the workshop and sent to all the participants. Habermas emphasizes that only an open discourse—one free from arbitrary relations of power—offers a legitimate and effective format to produce collective decisions. The inherently democratic beliefs underlying this model were supported by the workshop participants, even if every participant was not a "Habermas enthusiast," of which many were not.

The location of the meeting was aptly chosen. Morschach lies directly across the Lake from the Rütli meadow, where in the year 1291, representatives from the three central Swiss Cantons of Schweiz, Uri, and Unterwalden established the Swiss Confederation on the principle of democratic participation and popular sovereignty in opposition to the Hapsburg empire. For over 700 uninterrupted years, Switzerland has maintained its democratic heritage and expanded to a total of 22 cantons. Today it retains its essential form: a confederacy of independent cantons.

Habermas's work is a critical theory, because it asks people to reflect upon how their actions may be inconsistent with their values, interest, or beliefs. The model of communication he foresees is not only capable of producing agreement among people with individual needs, but essential to facilitating the construction of collective needs and collective definitions of the situation. It is throughout this kind of open communication that community happens. The workshop attendees took these ideas to heart. Repeatedly, the question was raised, "Are we engaging in rational discourse here and now?" We encourage each other to explore subtle forms of domination among ourselves and to attempt to reach a more egalitarian

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## Perspectives

(continued from page 14)

mode of collective discourse. To promote a setting where everyone had equal opportunities to participate, we conducted the meetings in roundtable format and chose a moderator to help the conversations flow. Because the goal of the workshop focused more on learning than on decision making, we could not evaluate it in the same way as we evaluated the participation models, but these reflections helped us to understand what was important about rational discourse.

One of the key results of the discussion was that, while characteristics of communicative interaction that occurs in public participation is surely essential, a model cannot be evaluated outside of its embeddedness in a particular problem setting. The action context of the model has important consequences on who participates, what spirit of cooperation they bear, and what realistic assumptions can be made about the implementability of the outcomes. This led to the collective decision not to tie the authors' hands with one set of criteria. Rather, the proponents and reviewers decided to evaluate the models in an informal manner, but one which would maintain a structural consistency among all chapters. The editors, it was decided, should attempt a more formal evaluation of the models in a final chapter.

The workshop was made possible by generous funding by the German Humboldt Foundation and the Swiss Federal Institute Interdisciplinary Project on Risk and Safety. The positive atmosphere of the workshop was provided both by the natural setting and the feeling of solidarity among the participants. We shared the belief that solving problems of human impacts on environment requires new instruments that encourage the construction of collective norms and cooperative social action. Improving society's relationship with the environment requires individuals are provided with the personal and social opportunities for self-reflection and development, as well as the responsibility for contributing to making decisions about environmental interventions. Our responsibility as scholars and as practitioners is to find practical ways to encourage the emergence of these opportunities for genuine democratic public participation.

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## Book Reviews

**Toxic Politics...** (continued from page 11)

multaneously advocating the strength of political power, Reich also addresses the constraints that political activation imposes upon the victims. Once the issue becomes politicized, the victims lose control over it. The objectives of the political parties tend to differ from the goals of the victims. Conflict thus arises between the social organizations and the political institutions. For example, the victims of the PCB contamination demanded that the Kanemi Company cease production and shut down. With political intervention, the victims were handsomely compensated, but the company continues to operate, and the government that abetted the company's stonewalling, and was forced to seek restitution to the victims, escaped accountability.

The three cases and the analysis all support Reich's argument that redress can only be obtained through politics. The methodological explanations for his argument are consistent, and the country case studies support his assumptions. Reich combined primary and secondary data to present an objective depiction of victims' struggles in the aftermath of a chemical disaster.

Reich states that "industrial society often creates and propagates technology far faster than it can control and respond to the consequences of that technology." The weakness in this statement is that companies are often aware of their misconduct before the actual contamination occurs. This was demonstrated by the Kanemi Company's cover-up of the PCB contamination; company officials doctored both repair and production reports. It is a cost benefit analysis that determines whether the company undertakes preventative costs, or awaits the consequential costs of disaster. Chemical and industrial disasters are inevitable in a modern society; however, it is false to state that companies and government cannot keep up with the consequences of technology. Reaction to environmental disaster is not a function of capability, but rather of profits.

Another weakness of the book is that Reich chose First World nations for his comparison. I wonder if the same process for redress occurred in India regarding the Union Carbide accident in Bhopal, India? Reich attempted to prove similarities across cultural

lines, but what about across economic lines? Victims in Third World countries, or totalitarian regimes are probably unable to follow the same course to redress.

More than anything, the role of political power should be extracted from this book. Look at our society: neither abortion nor sexual harassment should be political issues. They have been strategically placed on the political agenda because the activists understand political realities. Organizations derive power and credibility from political allies. All socially active groups seeking either redress or change must be aware of the immutable role of power and politics in achieving those goals.

Being a cynical public policy major, this book greatly appealed to me. Public policy is a system of influence, with the intentions of replacing old policies with new ones, and creating new policies to improve society. Citizens outside of the beltway are important catalysts, but they can't do it all alone. We need help, especially the help of the politically and economically influential. Politics is a never ending cycle of trade-offs. The victims of the Japanese disaster were compensated a substantial amount of money; however, the victims never got what they really wanted: justice. The Kanemi Company is still in existence, and the government escaped accountability.

"As long as social institutions lack adequate policies to manage or prevent chemical disasters, and as long as power remains unequally distributed in society, potential victims need to understand the politics of toxic contamination, for it is through politics that the victims obtain redress." This theory on the power of political influence applies to all social causes.

Although I agree with Reich's argument about the role of political power, I do not readily agree with the assumption that redress is a culturally neutral issue. Victims living in a nation that censors the media and suppresses the right to association and speech cannot fit into the three stages Reich describes in the book. Power plays a definitive role in all societies, but not all societies are designed to follow this strict route to restitution.

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TO: Members of the Environment and Technology Section, ASA

FROM: Chris Cluett, Battelle Seattle Research Center, 4000 NE 41st Street, Seattle, WA 98105-5428

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