

# Environment, Technology and Society

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

SUMMER 2013

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**Website Manager:**  
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**Listserv Manager:**  
Andrew Van Alstyne [avanalst@umich.edu](mailto:avanalst@umich.edu)

## Section Website

<http://www.envirosoc.org/>

## Making the Personal Political Once More: An Environmental Sociologist's Story

by Liam Leonard,  
Institute of Technology, Sligo, Ireland

In order to better understand the challenges faced by environmental sociologists in contemporary society, I will present an overview of my research in this area within the context of an overall theme; that theme being 'the significance of regional research initiatives as part of national and global attempts to engage with environmental problems'. The context of this article will be my return to live in the United States after many years living in Ireland. I will examine the parameters of my own research within an overarching theme. This framework is bound by the locations and story of my own extended family and the manner in which this has shaped my perspectives on environmental issues. The article will utilize narrative theory in as a method for interweaving a personal perspective with salient sociological theories. Undoubtedly, our perspectives on environmental issues are shaped by our location and personal experiences. Therefore, I would like to open this discussion from the viewpoint of 'the personal' in order to make a contribution to the wider and more comprehensive debates on issues of environmental conservation and technological development.

*Continued on page 3*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>2</b> | <b>Section News</b>  |
| 2        | Environmental & Technology Section Election Results                                      |
| 2        | Mapping Common Interests among Student Members   |
| <b>1</b> | <b>Features</b>  |
| 1,3      | Making the Personal Political Once More:<br>An Environmental Sociologist's Story         |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Conferences, Calls for Papers, Grant Applications,<br/>and Program Advertisements</b> |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Publications</b>  |
| 6        | Books  |
| 7        | Articles   |
| <b>9</b> | <b>Member News</b>   |



Overall, the “core” of the interest network revolves around the most commonly reported topics, including environmental justice (27.3%) and climate change (21.8%), followed by sustainability (18.2%) and food/agriculture (18.2%). In addition, topics such as social movements, attitudes/behavior, politics/policy, markets/economy, and disasters were also identified as fulfilling “bridging” roles (network betweenness centrality) to frequently link common interests among students. As a whole, we can begin to “see” the true breadth of the field among the current cohort of ETS student members.

As with any work, these results are currently limited. The data collected is restricted to student listserv members, with potential self-selection bias among respondents, in addition to the topics of interest based on open-ended responses, whereby the list of topics is far from complete. However, we have begun to illustrate not only where current student interests in the field lie, but also demonstrate the inherent interdisciplinarity of the field and diversity of interests. With many (69%) of the students reporting academic pursuits, we can take a peek at the direction of the future of the field.

For any questions, comments, or inquiries, please feel free to contact Christine Bevc at [bevc@unc.edu](mailto:bevc@unc.edu) or Lillian O’Connell at [loconne@ncsu.edu](mailto:loconne@ncsu.edu). To subscribe to the ENVIROgrads listserv, please go to <http://listserv.neu.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=ENVIROGRADS>.

### **Making the Personal Political Once More: An Environmental Sociologist’s Story**

*by Liam Leonard  
(continued)*

This article has utilized Fisher’s concept of the ‘narrative paradigm’, that is communication framed by a cultural, historical and personal narrative, in order to outline the relationship between sociological attempts to ‘give voice’ and provide new meanings to local environmental and social changes which have occurred in recent decades. Although this narrative is based on a personal perspective, this is undertaken so as to better illuminate the significant changes that have occurred in various moments on either the Atlantic or Pacific seaboard, within the context of an environmental sociologist’s life and work.

The circumstances and locations experienced in my life have also influenced my own ‘sociological

imagination’ in relation to issues of environmentalism and sustainability in society. Family connections and local perspectives play a part in the personal sentiments, which shape our understandings of the hinterland around us. As someone with a broad family background and who has lived in The United States, Ireland and Britain, my perspective as a sociologist has been developed by this combination of the biographical and the academic, in the manner of Michael Burawoy’s ‘public intellectual’. Social circumstances experienced in both continents provided the backdrop for the evolution of a personal and political viewpoint on green issues.

Like many, I was drawn to environmental sociology out of a concern for the ongoing degradation caused by accelerated human development and the impacts this has had on the planet. From my earliest childhood in the 1960s and 1970s on the outskirts of Philadelphia, I became aware of the threats to the environment posed by pollution. Culturally, it was the era of the new social movements, including feminism, civil rights, the peace movement and environmentalism. One of the key slogans of the time was Carol Hanisch’s rallying cry that ‘the personal is the political’. This perspective provides a key moment of congruence between the praxis of activism and the theoretical premise that underpins C. Wright Mill’s pivotal concept of ‘The Sociological Imagination’. Moreover, we can come to a sociological understanding of ‘giving voice’ to both the environment and communities threatened by industrial development through the advent of the Environmental Justice movement which was emerging in the Northeastern region of the United States through the ‘Love Canal’ controversy in the late 1970s. In addition, the nascent anti-nuclear campaign became part of the wider socio-cultural landscape, and “No Nukes” became a familiar slogan, which launched a thousand bumper stickers.

By this time, I had moved to Ireland. The Cold War was the dominant story of the day, but a second wave of the environmental movement was emerging. One result of the success of the US environmental justice movement and the Environmental Protection Agency in the United States was the relocation of polluting industries to other destinations around the world. One of these destinations was Ireland, where longstanding concerns with high rates of unemployment led to local authorities competing to attract dirty industries to its once pristine shores. As with the American experience, an environmental movement emerged in Ireland. This became the focus of my postgraduate research, and culminated in my book *Green Nation: the Irish Environmental Movement from Carnsore*

*Point to the Rossport 5*, later republished by Springer as *The Environmental Movement in Ireland*.

One of the main theoretical premises I took in this study was the development of local sentiments as a factor in the mobilization of environmental protests. This perspective incorporated Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' in the emergence of pro-environmental agendas. I have also had the honor of co-editing a special issue of the *Environmental Politics* journal on global environmental justice issues, a collection, which was later, published as a book by Routledge. My work received national recognition in Ireland when I was elected President of the Sociology Association of Ireland. As editor of both the *Advances in Ecopolitics* and *Advances in Sustainability and Environmental Justice* book series with Emerald Insight, I have been able to publish the work of environmental sociologists from every continent.

However, the focus of my life and research has once again turned to America. My family spans the length of the planet, from Ireland to Philadelphia and on to Hawaii and the Philippines, due to my uncle who was a commander in the US Navy and his Filipino wife. I have many cousins in Hawaii, and I note with interest the campaigns against GMOs there. I have established the *Ireland-Hawaii Project* with Professor Carlos Juarez of Hawaii Pacific University to chart the similarities in what Immanuel Wallerstein outlined in his 'World Systems Theory' as core-peripheral relationships, in this case between Ireland and Europe and Hawaii and the United States. The Ireland-Hawaii Project is a research project, which examines the relationships between Ireland and Europe and Hawaii and the United States. As an 'islands' research project it also develops a comparative analysis between Ireland and Hawaii in areas such as society, sustainability, politics and economy, tourism, education, human rights and social justice, criminal justice, and health and well being.

This year, I have relocated to Orange County in Southern California. It seems I have been destined to understand this country from both the Pacific and the Atlantic perspectives. The California coast throws up many striking dichotomies, all juxtaposed under the palm trees and sunshine that has made the area famous. Huntington Beach is a popular resort, and the local suburbs are home to a large commuter belt population. The area is one of the homes of surfing culture, following on from the Hawaiian tradition. A closer look reveals the oil derricks and wells, which predated the resort. And within this overview lies the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, which alongside the local beaches is a wildlife preserve. The Ecological Reserve is in the hands of the local population, as

developments cannot proceed without a local vote. This will also provide a comparative focus for my environmental research in the coming months.

Orange County is indeed very different from the Emerald Isle. The global environmental challenges facing us now could not have been fully imagined by the social movement protestors of the 1960s and 1970s.

I am particularly grateful to the Environment & Technology Section for its support over the years. Many of my books have been featured in the *E & T Newsletter*, and many of you have contacted me with words of encouragement for my work as a result. This 'narrative paradigm' approach has added to that contribution. I look forward to further engagement and debate with ASA E & T members, in addition to looking forward to pursuing the challenges of environmental sociology with you in my native country.

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## Conferences, Calls for Papers and Program Advertisements

### Rutgers University Press announces a new book series in environmental sociology: **NATURE, SOCIETY, AND CULTURE**

*Nature, Society, and Culture*, a sophisticated and wide-ranging sociological literature analyzing nature-society-culture interactions has blossomed in recent decades. This new series provides a platform for showcasing the best of that scholarship: carefully crafted empirical studies of socio-environmental change and the effects such change has on ecosystems, social institutions, historical processes and cultural practices.

The series aims for topical and theoretical breadth. Anchored in sociological analyses of the environment, the series will be home to studies that employ a range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives to investigate the pressing socio-environmental questions of our time – from environmental inequality and risk, to the science and politics of climate change and serial disaster, to the environmental causes and consequences of urbanization and war-making, and beyond.

Series Editor  
Scott Frickel, Washington State University

For general information and guidelines for submitting book proposals contact:

Peter Mickulas, Editor  
Rutgers University Press  
[\(848\) 445-7752](tel:8484457752)  
[mickulas@rutgers.edu](mailto:mickulas@rutgers.edu)

### **Mother Pelican**

*Mother Pelican* is a monthly e-journal on solidarity and sustainability issues. The journal collects, organizes, and disseminates information on sustainable development, with especial focus on integral human development. The intersection of social, technological, and religious dimensions is of particular interest.

Monthly updates are distributed free of charge via the Solidarity-Sustainability group list. The monthly

updates usually include a brief feature article on current solidarity-sustainability topics or forthcoming events, several one-page articles on recently emerging research, and six supplements:

1. Advances in Sustainable Development
2. Directory of Sustainable Development Resources
3. Strategies for Solidarity and Sustainability
4. Best Practices for Solidarity and Sustainability
5. Fostering Gender Equality in Secular Institutions
6. Fostering Gender Equality in Religious Institutions

For more information, please visit the home page <http://pelicanweb.org/> and the June 2013 update <http://www.pelicanweb.org/solisustv09n06page1.html>

The submission of articles for publication is cordially invited. Only previously unpublished articles on the dual issues of solidarity and sustainability will be considered. Contact details and a form to subscribe to the Google Solidarity-Sustainability Group are provided at the end of each page.

### **Animals and Society Events at ASA 2013**

The Animals and Society section, is offering several events of potential mutual interest at the upcoming ASA meetings in New York:

On Saturday, August 10, from 8:30 to 10:10 we have our section session on "Inequality and Animals" with the following papers:

- [\*\*An Examination of Animal Service Officers' Views on Their Readiness to Report Domestic Violence\*\*](#) -- [Abigail Marie Malick](#) (University of Central Florida)
- [\*\*Large or Small Knowledge: Boundaries and their Consequences for Veterinary Students within the Tracking System\*\*](#) -- [Jenny Reese Vermilya](#) (University of Colorado)
- [\*\*Are People More Disturbed by Animal or Human Suffering: The Influence of Species and Age\*\*](#) -- [Jack Levin and Arnold Arluke](#) (Northeastern University)
- [\*\*Spectacular Morality and Mediated Representations: examining mediated claims surrounding nonhuman animals\*\*](#) -- [Brian M. Lowe](#) (State University of New York-Oneonta)

Of special significance to both sections, we have organized a panel session discussing the potential overlap in issues/scholarship between the two areas. This special panel session—"Animals and the Environment: Exploring Sociological Connections"—will occur on Saturday, August 10, from 10:30 to 11:30. Panelists include Thomas Dietz (Michigan State University), Colin Jerolmack (NYU), Linda Kalof (Michigan State University) and David Nibert (Wittenberg University).

Please also note that there is a regular session organized by Thomas Dietz entitled "Human-Animal Interaction." This session will be held on Sunday, August 11, from 8:30-10:10 and includes the following papers:

- [Legitimation, Naturalization and the Production of Human and Nonhuman Consent in Circus Discourse](#) – [Jessica Bell \(Michigan State University\)](#)
- [Political Interventions in the Urban Environment: "The Great Budapest Rat Massacre"](#) – [Virag Molnar \(New School for Social Research\)](#)
- [Taking Care of Pets: Institutional Policies, Interpretive Frameworks, and Practices regarding Domestic Animals in Newfoundland](#) – [Mark C.J. Stoddart, Liam Swiss, Nicole G. Power, and Lawrence Felt \(Memorial University of Newfoundland\)](#)
- [Toward an Ontology of the Bee: Ethnography and Urban Beekeeping](#) – [Lisa Jean Moore and Mary Kosut \(Purchase College - SUNY\)](#)

Finally, the section will host a joint reception with the Environment and Technology section on Monday, August 12, from 6:30-8:30.

### Meeting of The ASA Task Force on Sociology and Global Climate Change

The Task Force will meet on Sunday the 11<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 am during the ASA meeting in New York. At this time, Riley E. Dunlap, Chair of the Task Force will give an update on the progress of the Task Force's edited volume with Oxford Press and will share his experiences as Chair. All are welcome to attend.

## International Sociological Association, World Congress of Sociology, Yokohama, Japan, July 13-19, 2014. Sessions of Research Committee 23: Sociology of Science and Technology

The call for submission of abstracts of papers to be considered for presentation in the sessions of Research Committee 23 is now open and will remain open until September 30, 2013. A list of the sessions to be offered is provided below. Information on how to submit an abstract is available on the ISA website at <https://isaconf.confex.com/isaconf/wc2014/cfp.cgi>. Information on the World Congress can also be found on the ISA website at <http://www.isa-sociology.org/congress2014/>

Ralph Matthews, Ph.D.  
President ISA, RC23  
Professor, University of British Columbia, Canada  
[ralph.matthews@ubc.ca](mailto:ralph.matthews@ubc.ca)

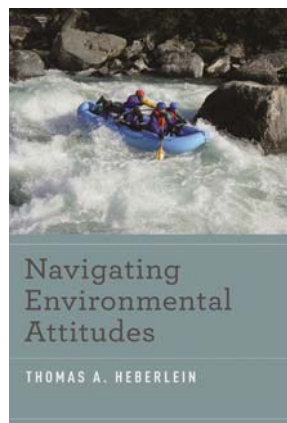
### Publications

#### Books

#### *Navigating Environmental Attitudes*

Thomas A. Heberlein  
Oxford University Press (2013)  
[www.oup.com/us](http://www.oup.com/us)

Solving environmental problems requires a scientific understanding of public attitudes. Like rocks in a swollen river, attitudes often lie beneath the surface—hard to see, and even harder to move or change.



In *Navigating Environmental Attitudes*, Thomas Heberlein helps us read the water and negotiate its hidden obstacles, explaining what attitudes are, how they change and influence behavior. Rather than necessarily trying to change public attitudes, we need to design solutions and policies with

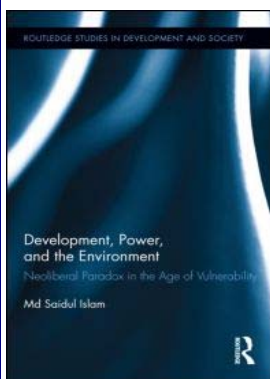
them in mind. He illustrates these points by tracing the attitudes of the well-known environmentalist Aldo Leopold, while tying social psychology to real-world behaviors throughout the book. Bringing together theory and practice, *Navigating Environmental Attitudes* provides a realistic understanding of why and how attitudes matter when it comes to environmental problems; and how, by balancing natural with social science, we can step back from false assumptions and unproductive, frustrating programs to work toward fostering successful, effective environmental action.

"As Thomas Heberlein notes, attitude is among the most used and least understood terms applied to describe our views of the natural world. In a book remarkable for its clarity and relevance, Heberlein enlightens and educates us about the meaning of attitudes, its role in our relationship to nature, and the potential for changing attitudes. He takes this difficult and often laborious subject and makes it richly entertaining and informative, using many vivid examples and experiences. This is a must read book for those interested in environmental conservation and management." —Stephen Kellert, Yale University

### ***Development, Power and the Environment: Neoliberal Paradox in the Age of Vulnerability***

Md Saidul Islam  
Routledge (2013)

<http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415540025/>



Unmasking the neoliberal paradox, this book provides a robust conceptual and theoretical synthesis of development, power and the environment. With seven case studies on global challenges such as under-development, food regime, climate change, dam building, identity politics, and security vulnerability, the book offers a

new framework of a "double-risk" society for the Global South.

With apparent ecological and social limits to neoliberal globalization and development, the current levels of consumption are unsustainable, inequitable, and inaccessible to the majority of

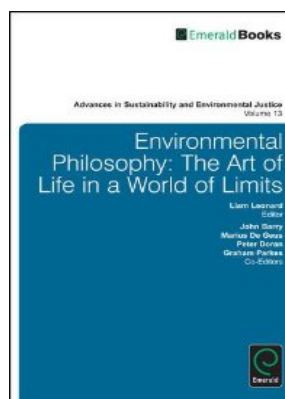
humans. Power has a great role to play in this global trajectory. Though power is one of most pervasive phenomena of human society, it is probably one of the least understood concepts. The growth of transnational corporations, the dominance of world-wide financial and political institutions, and the extensive influence of media that are nearly monopolized by corporate interests are key factors shaping our global society today. In the growing concentration of power in few hands, what is apparent is a non-apparent nature of power. Understanding the interplay of power in the discourse of development is a crucial matter at a time when our planet is in peril — both environmentally and socially. This book addresses this current crucial need.

### ***Environmental Philosophy: The Art of Life in a World of Limits***

Liam Leonard

Emerald Group Publishing (2013)

[http://www.amazon.com/Environmental-Philosophy-Advances-Sustainability-Justice/dp/1783501367/ref=sr\\_1\\_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1371155154&sr=1-3&keywords=Liam+Leonard](http://www.amazon.com/Environmental-Philosophy-Advances-Sustainability-Justice/dp/1783501367/ref=sr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1371155154&sr=1-3&keywords=Liam+Leonard)



Humankind has long considered the relationship it holds with nature to be both a blessing and a challenge. The onset of climate change has brought a new impetus to this relationship. This volume of *Advances in Sustainability and Environmental Justice* will examine environmental

philosophy from a number of viewpoints. Each contributor has a unique perspective on the interaction and engagement between humanity and the rest of nature, from the technological to the philosophical. *Environmental Philosophy: the Art of Life in a World of Limits* provides a series of interesting studies on humanity's place in the world, and the impact this is having on the planet. The book poses the question as to whether life can be lived in harmony with nature, and what limits can be achieved in the impact such life has on the world around us.

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## Member News

### Randolph Haluza-DeLay

Randolph received a First Place award for op-ed published in 2012 for: "The Northern Gateway

Pipeline: Why we Cling to Oil." *The Catalyst* (Citizens for Public Justice). (Apr2012). [www.cpj.ca/files/docs/Catalyst-Spring-2012.pdf](http://www.cpj.ca/files/docs/Catalyst-Spring-2012.pdf) This award was from the Canadian Church Press association; judge's comments are at: <http://canadianchurchpress.com/awards/2013-ccp-awards/category-opinion-piece/>

### **Richard York**

Richard York has garnered a string of impressive awards. He has received the Faculty Excellence Award from the University of Oregon for a "sustained record of distinction in research, teaching, and leadership."

In addition, he has received the Thomas F. Herman Faculty Achievement Award for Distinguished Teaching from the University of Oregon. This is the University's highest teaching award for senior faculty. In the words of Sociology Department Head Jocelyn Hollander, "[Professor York] stands out for his commitment, his generosity, and his ability to make complicated quantitative and theoretical material comprehensive to a wide range of students. He richly deserves an honor of this sort."

Finally, Richard will be a fellow in residence at the School of Social Science at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, NJ, for the 2013-14 academic year.