

ASA Section on Environment and Technology Officers' Reports, August 2006

Chairs Report - Stella Capek

Since last August, we've been busy in the Section organizing our future program, supporting the creative initiatives of our members, and putting resources behind proposals that promise to put our environmental sociology knowledge to good use.

Response to Hurricane Katrina

After Hurricane Katrina, at the initiative of Bob Brulle and Timmons Roberts (who took this on as a special project as Chair-elect), the Council supported the funding of a press release that offered media contact information for environmental sociologists with expertise on class, race, environment, and the nature of responses to the Hurricane Katrina disaster. We used Section funds to diffuse this through the Society for Environmental Journalists and a private public relations firm, eReleases (see Timmons Roberts' report). This was an effort to respond to the lack of a sociological perspective in media coverage of Hurricane Katrina, and our quick response and broad outreach was several steps ahead of the ASA, which supported our initiative.

I wrote to the President of the ASA, Cynthia Epstein, to see if the ASA would include some sessions on responses to Hurricane Katrina at the Montreal meetings. Although most of the program was already set, she passed my letter on to the Program Committee. The ASA did ask Kai Erikson to organize a thematic session on Hurricane Katrina ("The Flooding of New Orleans: Views From Up Close"), and environmental sociologists from the Section are well represented in the session. Whether or not our letter had a direct impact, it was one more voice reminding the ASA about the importance of environmental issues.

Construction of the 2006 Montreal Sessions

As Program Chair for the 2006 meetings, I organized the Environment and Technology paper sessions. According to our membership numbers (they stand at 372 as of July), we are presently allocated two paper sessions by the ASA. As a follow-up to our discussions at the Council and Business Meeting last August, I asked for input from the Council for a thematic paper session, a departure from the recent trend of completely open sessions. The rationale for a themed as well as an open session was to build excitement in the field around a particular topic of broad interest and to also allow a wide range of participation. After some good suggestions, I chose the topic "Society and Nature: Theoretical Approaches." The other paper session was open, and I constructed a topic ("Culture, Environmentalism, and Social Justice") based on the papers received.

I recruited Jan Meij at Oklahoma State University to organize the roundtable sessions, and we worked together on a program that resulted in nine different tables on a broad range of topics, including a test run of a student-organized panel (thanks to the students for their initiative). I thank Jan Meij for doing such a fine job on the roundtables. Because our roundtable program was already quite full, I deferred the idea (discussed last year) of using a roundtable space for a Critics Meet the Authors session, although I would like to pursue it in the future (suggestions needed!), since it generates good discussions and excitement about the field.

Although I don't think this was the best year for communication between organizers of environment-related sessions across the ASA, there were only minor glitches in the process and in the ASA electronic submission process. Our reception, once again, is off-site, with thanks to Bob Brulle for negotiating a space for us. Thanks also to Riley Dunlap, who began working early on communications with Canadian colleagues about a space for our reception.

Site Tour and Mini-Symposium on Environmental Justice at Akwesasne

Ken Gould proposed a pre-conference sit tour and mini-symposium to be hosted by the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe Environmental Division that would allow a number of environmental sociologists to learn about local

environmental justice issues. The Council voted to support designating Ken as a liaison to Sociologists Without Borders, our proposed co-sponsor for the event. The Council also voted in July to support a \$500 honorarium for the tribe.

Special Forum: “The Future of Environmentalism”

Maurie Cohen proposed a follow-up to last year’s successful off-site forum on “The Death of Environmentalism,” focusing this time on “The Future of Environmentalism.” The Council voted to support this event and provided money to rent the site. The Council also voted to allocate some money to pay for a listserv announcement by the Society for Environmental Journalists to heighten the visibility of the Death of Environmentalism Symposium published in *Organization and Environment*.

Keeping the Structure Going—Elections and Committees

We held elections this year for six positions. The Nominations Committee, headed by Bob Edwards, who worked with Lori Hunter, came up with an excellent slate of candidates, and we welcome new members: David Sonnenfeld (Secretary-Treasurer), Bill Markham (Publications Committee Chair), David Pellow (Policy & Research Committee Chair), Tom Rudel (Nominations Committee Chair), Kari Norgaard (Council Member), and Rebecca Altman (Student Representative). Thanks to all Council members whose term is up (Maurie Cohen, Richard York, Bob Edwards, Marcia Hill Gossard, Steve Zavestoski, and Dana Fisher). A special thanks to Bob Brulle, whose 3-year term as Secretary/Treasurer is ending, and whose level of energy and organization has served us so well, and has made my job much easier. Please remember that if you are an outgoing council member, you need to pass a notebook of duties (and any advice you have) on to your replacement.

A note on committee memberships: according to our by-laws, the Section Chair either makes the committee appointments, or takes recommendations and approves choices made by committee chairs. In a few cases, it wasn’t clear to me who still was and wasn’t on a committee, especially with the by-laws transition that left us temporarily with two different lengths of terms. In the future, committee chairs, please keep me posted about this process. I also like the practice of a mid-year check-in with committee chairs to see how things are going.

For details of this year’s committee work, including awards committees, please see individual committee reports from the chairs of Nominations, Membership, Publications (including newsletter, website, and listserv), Policy and Research, and Teaching and Training committees. Many thanks to all who worked on these committees.

Newsletter

A special thanks to Stephan Scholz, who has done an excellent job this year putting out our newsletter. Thanks also to all who sent in material for the newsletter—please keep it coming.

Greening the ASA

I’ve followed up on the “Greening of the ASA” letter that we submitted to the ASA Executive Council in June 2005. They deferred discussion of it until their January meeting, and recently I was informed (unofficially, because their minutes are not formally approved until the August meeting) that they were in favor of the idea, and wanted to study what was already happening and what some possible models are. I’m looking for a more concrete response, especially since we recommended models and offered expertise from our Section.

Planning for 2007

Our next ASA meetings will be in New York City, and the Environment and Technology Section will be very well represented in the ASA’s Thematic Sessions, thanks to the creativity and quick thinking of some of our members. David Sonnenfeld organized a session on “Globalization and Environmental Governance”; Bob Brulle and Timmons Roberts organized “Science, Democracy and Environment: The Contributions of Barry Commoner”; Riley Dunlap organized a session on “Environmental Justice”; and John Bellamy Foster organized a session on “Environmental Constraints on Development.” Looks like a banner year!

We will once again have two paper sessions. We will need to decide whether we like the model of one open session and one themed session. As second year Chair-Elect, Timmons will be the organizer of next year's program (he will also oversee the Boguslaw Award). He is looking for a volunteer who would like to work on the 2007 roundtables. Timmons and I also talked about continuing our tradition of meeting off-site for a reception, and finding an interesting place for us in NYC.

We are very interested in council members and Section members' views about the direction of the Section, and very much encourage your input.

To follow up on a project I brought up last year, I've talked to Anne Shlay, Chair of the Community and Urban Sociology Section (CUSS) about some possible bridge-building between our sections. Timmons and I discussed this as well. Co-sponsoring and the trade-off of sessions is difficult when we only have two paper sessions allocated (unless we get an extra session by being on the last day of the meetings, as we did in 2004, or unless we have a sudden surge in membership that puts us over 400), so Timmons and I also explored the possibility of a one-day pre-conference symposium, of the type that he co-organized with the Political Economy of the World System section. My dream topic would be something on consumption and sustainability, and second in line would be something perhaps relating to growth and urban sprawl. Regarding consumption, there is plenty of exciting writing on this topic in both sections from a slightly different angle, but we rarely share a forum. I would like to see this happen and will pursue it. More details to follow.

Also, last year when John Bellamy Foster was elected Chair of the Marxist Section, he expressed interest in co-sponsoring with us in NYC. That is another possibility.

Thanks to everyone on the Council this past year, for your ideas and hard work!

Chair- Elects Report - Timmons Roberts

First of all, I'd like to say 1) that I'm sorry to not be there in Montreal, 2) that look forward to working with you all next year, and 3) thank you all for all you've done for our section. I am a bit daunted with the task of taking over as Chair, but Stella and Bob have already been extremely helpful in calming me down and teaching me some of the ropes. Their help and yours will be critical to keep us moving forward. But as I screw up, we can all blame Bob Edwards for everything, including talking me into running for Chair-Elect while knowing I'd be off on sabbatical in England. That said, I think it's going to be exciting times. Here is something of a report from me as Chair-Elect.

1. As you all recall, after the horrible Katrina disaster just after last year's ASA, a few of us were fed up enough with the kinds of experts we were seeing on TV and wishing that environmental sociologists were better represented. So we drafted up a "tip sheet" with some top experts among us, which you all unanimously approved, and which I've pasted at the bottom here to remind us of how it went. Bob Brulle and his wife had some experience in getting out press releases to national lists of journalists, so we spent section funds (\$674 total) to put this out through the Society for Environmental Journalists and a private PR firm, eReleases. Our list was far wider than the material the ASA central office sent out, though they did finally act. I did not follow up with the experts listed here to see if they got calls based on this (I received two). Several on our list were very widely quoted, and Shirley even testified in congress.

2. We wanted to try the Katrina quick response release as a test run for future efforts to be active on policy issues. It is my opinion that we are missing a huge role for our profession, which is participating in national debates on crucial issues, and that we need to be bolder. We could either establish one committee or a series of ad hoc groups of 2-3 people to lead the writing of brief "white papers" or tip sheets like this and release them on salient issues. What comes quickly to my mind are issues like the chiseling away at community and worker Right-to-Know about hazards, national policy on Environmental Justice, U.S. Climate Change policy, and so on. I welcome your thoughts and initiative to take up one or another that you care about and know about. We have to be aware of ASA rules, but we can move forward and see what is possible.

3. I'd like to hear more from everyone on where they'd like to see the section go. By this I mean thinking big, or at least what would inspire more people to participate or you in particular to participate more. In particular I am thinking about how we are not utilizing the experience of our old-timers well enough, and at the same time not developing new people with exciting roles in our organization.

4. For next year's conference, Stella and I talked about an off-site reception, and perhaps including some community leaders to participate in a special session. We have four thematics on the environment, which is a stunning achievement for us. But she and I discussed the possibility of a one-day mini-conference the day before ASA, somewhere nearby but off-site in NYC. Stella and I discussed doing that perhaps with the Community and Urban section (CUSS), on something like consumerism, sprawl, and sustainability. We've had some good one-day events in recent years, and I've co-organized one between E+T and PEWS several years back. The organizing is fairly easy, in my experience, since participants get themselves there. It essentially could mean 3-4 sessions, with perhaps one being a keynote and one being a discussion. The idea is to create discussion and to move the field forward. That's enough. Have a great conference, and I'll look forward to hearing from you. I'm an email junky, so you'll hear back from me if you contact me.

Secretary/Treasurer Report - Robert Brulle

As of June 30, 2006, the section had total net worth of \$6,609. This is a decrease of \$42 from the June 30, 2005. I am projecting a total annual income of \$2,806 in membership dues/allocations for the 2007 fiscal year.

I am projecting a total expenditure of \$2,400 this year as follows:

1. Award Certificates \$150
2. Printing of Section Brochure approx \$300
3. Student paper cash award \$100
4. Reception and room rental at ASA 2006 - Montreal approx \$1,350 (CA \$)
5. Honorarium to Akwesasne Indians - associated with tour of reservation \$500

This will leave us a budget surplus of \$406 for this year. Based on these projections, we should end the 2007 Fiscal Year on June 30, 2007 with an estimated net worth of \$7,015.

Nominations Committee Report - Bob Edwards

Elections were held for the following offices. The following individuals were the winners:

Council Member **Kari M. Norgaard**
Nominations Committee Chair **Thomas K. Rudel**
Policy & Research Committee Chair **David Pellow**
Publications Committee Chair **William T. Markham**
Secretary-Treasurer **David A. Sonnenfeld**
Student Representative **Rebecca G. Altman**

Elections for the following offices will be held this year:

1. Section Chair-Elect
2. Membership Committee Chair
3. Teaching and Training Chair
4. Council Member At Large

Membership Committee Report - Beth Caniglia

1. As of July 31, 2006, section membership stood at 373. This is consistent with membership numbers in past years. Last year at this time our membership total stood at 356, so we are slightly higher.
2. According to ASA's estimates, we are projected to gain 9 members by this time next year, leaving us slightly short of the 400 member mark needed for an additional section session at next year's ASA meeting.

We are slightly down on our student memberships (6 below last year's figure), so we might encourage our members to recruit their students to the section.

Publications Committee Report - Richard York

Richard York, Chair
Stephan Scholz, Newsletter Editor

Rob Gardner, Website Manager

Andrew Van Alstyne, Listserv Manager

Brochure We have revised the section brochure and printed 200 copies in color on recycled paper for distribution at this year's ASA meeting.

Newsletter The section newsletter has been produced quarterly and has come out in a timely fashion over the past year (distributed electronically). It has been particularly strong due to the contributions of section members.

Website A section on graduate programs in environmental sociology has been added to the website, with the help of Lori Peek. We are in the process of adding links to the website and we encourage section members to suggest appropriate ones. Other aspects of the website are also in the process of being updated (e.g., the list of award winners).

Listserv The listserv has functioned well over the past year and no serious issues have arisen.

Policy and Research Committee Report - Maurie Cohen

Overview

The activities of the Policy & Research Committee represent a combination of both mandated and discretionary initiatives. In my capacity as chair of the committee, I have this past year overseen the annual processes associated with granting the ETS Outstanding Publication Award and the Marvin E. Olsen Student Paper Certificate. In addition, I have undertaken to organize the Section's second annual so-called session in exile—an extracurricular session that takes place in tandem with (but not formally sanctioned by) the ASA conference and is designed to provide

ETS Outstanding Publication Award

The subcommittee assembled to administer this award-granting process consisted of David Sonnenfeld (Washington State University), Simone Pulver (Brown University), and myself. To address problems that arose last year (an overly large number of nominations), the predecision was made this time around to only consider sole-authored books (with 2004 and 2005 publication dates). The subcommittee received four eligible nominations (after eliminating two or three submissions for various eligibility reasons) and after a lengthy telephone conference call in May decided to grant the award this year to Peter Dickens (Cambridge University) in recognition of his book *Society and Nature*. I am delighted to report that Peter will be attending the ASA Conference and will be present at the Section's business meeting to personally receive this award.

Marvin E. Olsen Student Paper Certificate

The subcommittee assembled to handle this award was comprised of Scott Frey (University of Tennessee) and Sara Shostak (Columbia University), and myself. The committee received a total of five eligible nominations and after careful consideration and deliberation decided to issue this year's award to Jessica Crowe, a master's degree student in the sociology department at Washington State University. The title of the winning paper was "Community Economic Development Strategies in Rural Washington: Toward a Synthesis of Natural and Social Capital." This award carries a \$100 honorarium paid out of Section funds. It was also the consensus of the committee to issue a non-cash "honorable mention" award to Lisa Asplen, a PhD student in the sociology department at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for her paper entitled "Decentering Environmental Sociology: Lessons from Post-Humanist Science and Technology Studies." Both awardees will be formally recognized at the Section's business meeting.

Session in Exile

The Section's "Session in Exile" emerged as an idea last year as a way to create a more informal venue outside of the strictures of the ASA conference format. Last year's event in Philadelphia was held at a nearby off-conference site (Drexel University) and consisted of presentations responding to the widely disseminated essay entitled "The Death of Environmentalism." Revised drafts of these papers were published in the March 2006 issue of the journal *Organization and Environment*. This year's session will consider "The Future of Environmental Sociology and the Environmental Sociology of the Future" and will be held on Saturday, August 12 from 2-5pm at the Holiday Inn Select (across the street from the Palais de Congress).

Teaching and Training Committee Report - Lori Peek

Committee Members: Lori Peek, Colorado State University (Chair)
 Michael Agliardo, Boston College
 Christine Bevc, University of Colorado-Boulder

1. As our first official activity, the Teaching and Training Committee compiled a list of graduate programs that offer a concentration in environmental sociology, environmental studies, or some other closely related area. The list is posted on the E&T web page at: <http://www.linfield.edu/soan/et/links.htm>. There are currently 14 programs listed on the website that offer concentrations in environmental sociology at the graduate level (M.A. and/or Ph.D.). There are also 8 programs listed on the website that offer concentrations in environmental policy, environmental science, or environmental studies at the graduate level (M.A. and/or Ph.D.).

We gathered the information for the website by: a) sending a call for graduate programs to the E&T listserv; b) contacting universities that listed an environmental sociology concentration in the ASA Guide to Graduate Programs; and c) contacting professors in departments that we knew had environmental sociology concentrations, but did not respond to the initial email announcement and were not listed in the ASA guide.

2. We announced the newly created web page on the E&T listserv, and also published an announcement in the spring issue of the E&T newsletter.

3. To date, the committee has published two articles in the E&T newsletter on teaching environmental sociology classes to undergraduates. See "Core Insights on Teaching Introduction to Environmental Sociology" by Michael Agliardo (Spring 2006) and "Understanding Your Audience: Applications to Teaching" by Christine Bevc (Summer 2006).

4. The committee has begun soliciting articles on teaching and training issues to be published in upcoming editions of the E&T newsletter.

5. The committee has been tracking all activities in a notebook, which will be passed on to the new committee members at the end of our two-year term.

Report on the ISA-RC-24 in Durban - Dana Fisher

During the International Sociological Association Meeting in Durban in July 2006, the Research Committee on Environment and Society was extremely active.

The RC-24 had an overwhelming number of submissions for its sessions at this year's meeting. Due to our high membership, we were permitted the maximum number of sessions during the Conference. Thus, the RC-24 held 17 sessions over the six days of the conference for paper presentations. It also held one session for roundtables. Even with the 17 sessions, there were too many presenters with too little time for each person. For the next ISA in Sweden in 2010, we hope to arrange a better way to give all presenters ample time for their talks.

All of the sessions were well attended, with over 100 people in attendance during some of the paper sessions. In fact, the organizers of the ISA meeting reported that the Research Committee on Environment and Society was one of the most well attended and active committees in the entire meeting. A number of members of the ISA were in attendance at the conference and presented at the RC-24 session.

In the past 4 years, the RC-24 held 15 conferences on environmental topics around the world. We aim to continue this trend. A number of members are discussing plans for conferences in the next few years. During the business meeting, Michael Redclift was the first sociologist awarded the Buttel Award.

To sign-up for the ISA's RC-24 and receive our newsletter, contact Dana Fisher (drf2004@columbia.edu).

