

ENVIRONMENT & SOCIETY

INTERNATIONAL SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

President's Column

by **Raymond Murphy**, President of RC-24

Department of Sociology

University of Ottawa, Canada

The new executive and board of the Research Committee Environment and Society (RC-24) of the International Sociological Association have enormous shoes to fill: those of President Arthur Mol and his executive and board who did such an excellent job between 2002 and 2006. This was evident in the RC-24 sessions at the World Sociological Congress in Durban. RC-24 was one of the rare research committees that had the maximum number of sessions, in fact, when a joint session (two RCs) and an integrative session (3 RCs) are included it had more than the maximum number. RC-24 accepted 145 papers from all over the world for presentation. Unfortunately these had to be crammed into 18 sessions according to ISA rules. The number of no-shows was not known in advance, especially for a location as far away as South Africa since only a few RC-24 members are from Africa. But most presenters came: I would estimate that 80% of presenters attended their RC-24 session. This left us with the problem of a shortage of time for presentations and for discussion at many sessions. Attendance was high in terms not only of the number of presenters of papers but also of the number of people in the audience: four or five sessions had more than 100 people. I heard reports from people who also attended sessions in other RCs that RC-24 sessions were generally the best in quality. Participants at our sessions deserve a great deal of credit for their presentations and insightful questions and comments.

The World Congress mode of session-making has the advantage that no RC-24 session was in direct competition with any other RC-24 session. However, RC-24 did have one major problem: it has become too popular for the ISA structure. The ISA rules do not allow any more sessions than the number we had. We have hit the ceiling of number of sessions for a 6-day conference. Hence it was necessary to place too many presentations into each session. RC-24 has been inclusive because decisions to accept or reject papers are made on the basis of only a title and abstract, and because it was not known whether most people would attend. When they did attend, the result of the overbooking was that many presenters unfortunately had little time to speak or answer questions. Even the Buttell Award winner, Michael Redclift, had little time to talk. Hopefully, the mini-presentations nevertheless stimulated interest, further discussions after the session, or in the hallways or at lunch, as well as requests for papers. But the situation is far from ideal. At the next World Congress I will push the ISA to have a symposium or plenary session on an environmental theme and use the number and quality of RC-24 presentations this time to argue that case. A way will be sought to give the Buttell Award winner more time to speak, perhaps in that symposium or plenary

session. We will also have to consider a 'session-in-exile' one morning outside the ISA venue in order to supplement our number of sessions, as is done by the Environment and Technology section of the American Sociological Association at its meetings.

There were unfortunately several problems with the overall organization of this World Congress. The congress began with participants having to stand in line for a long time to pick up their registration kits. Having only three clerks to deal with 3,000 pre-registrants (the same as the number of clerks to deal with a small number of on-the-spot registrants) guaranteed a monster, slow-moving queue that stretched from one end of the conference building to the other and back. Congress organizers were inflexible and unwilling to correct their mistakes: planning called for 3 clerks to handle what proved to be a massive queue and for 3 clerks where there was no queue, so 3 and 3 it would remain. The three employees were unable to process the multitude still in line by closing time, so the diminishingly patient standees were told to come back tomorrow to try again. A riot by sociologists might have broken out had it not been for the fact that the reception was next on the agenda, and this calmed the sociological imagination.

The World Congress Program in both its website and hardcopy versions was full of errors: speakers were missing, and as one of our members expressed it, "alien topics" were assigned to speakers. The ISA explanation was that information had to be input a second time because the programming methodology was incorrect the first time, so mistakes were added to errors.

The ISA decision not to include PowerPoint for RC sessions in the conference fee was also hotly contested. This decision was perplexing since up to US\$400 was charged as a conference fee and the ISA boasts that it makes a profit on World Congresses. I would argue that the best means to present papers is the most essential component of a conference fee and that this is especially important for an international association that bridges linguistic differences. Less essential items of the budget should have been cut, since increasing the conference fee would keep participants away. The cost of PowerPoint should not be downloaded on RCs since only the ISA charges a conference fee for the World Congress. RC-24 was one of the rare RCs that supplied PowerPoint to presenters thanks to Past-president Arthur Mol. I counted the number of presentations that used it, and found that it was employed in about 75% of presentations. The hypothesis that PowerPoint is used only by presenters from wealthy A-category countries was soundly refuted. It was my impression that PowerPoint was especially helpful to presenters who do not have English as their mother tongue because they can display text, photos, tables, graphs, etc., on the screen without fumbling through transparencies. A PowerPoint presentation prepared in advance increases the confidence of non-native English speakers who must use English to bridge linguistic differences. Hence PowerPoint is more necessary for ISA conferences than for national meetings in countries where only one language is spoken.

The choice of Durban has been questioned by many participants because it already had a reputation as a violent city. Three hours after arriving in Durban and two blocks from their hotel while purchasing adapter plugs for their computers, a Mexican sociologist and a Belgian sociologist were attacked by a gang of ten youths. He suffered a broken nose and ruptured eye vessels, and she was bumped on the head. Other reports of muggings of delegates were followed by warnings not to walk alone or in small groups

after dark (after 5 PM in winter in Durban), a massive police presence, unsolicited police escorts, and bussing for short distances that could have been walked much faster because departure was delayed until the bus was full. The congress took place in a climate of fear. It was not known whether all this security was necessary to cope with a real danger, or if the precautionary principle went amok with Durbanophobia needlessly damaging the image of Durban, or whether it was some combination of the two. This unfortunately displayed the worse of South Africa instead of the best. Some South African delegates stated that the less violent and beautiful city of Capetown should have been chosen because it has the facilities to hold such a congress (using hotels and the university).

In spite of these contextual problems, one conclusion is clear: the RC-24 meetings in Durban were a great success. Our research committee on environment and society has developed so successfully that it is pushing the limits of the ISA in which it is contained. Congratulations to all who participated. You did excellent work. I would like to end by encouraging RC-24 members to start thinking about possible inter-Congress regional RC-24 conferences during the next four years. RC-24 will support your initiative by publicizing your meeting in its Newsletter and announcing it to all members, and perhaps give a small grant or two to members from category B or C countries. Please inform me about possible dates when these become available so that simultaneous RC-24 meetings in the same region of the world can be avoided.

Notes from the Editor

by **Dana R. Fisher**, Secretary of RC-24 and Editor of the Newsletter

Department of Sociology
Columbia University, USA

Hello everyone. I want to take this opportunity to introduce myself: I'm Dana Fisher and I'm honored to be serving as the new secretary of the RC-24. For those of you who do not know me, I am currently in my fifth year working as an assistant professor in the Sociology Department at Columbia University in New York City. My work explores political decisionmaking and the role of non-state actors within political arrangements. Much of my research has analyzed environmental issues, predominantly global climate change, at the national and international-comparative levels. In addition, I have studied activism and protest around the world. Recently, I began a study of urban stewardship in New York City in collaboration with the United States Forest Service. It is my hope that the study will contribute to the development of a methodology for analyzing the connections among state, market, and civil society actors that are working to steward their local environments in cities around the world. If you're interested in learning more about me, feel free to check out my website: www.columbia.edu/~drf2004

In my post as the new Secretary for the RC-24, I hope to be able to facilitate increased communication among our members. The listserv is up and running and all members of the RC can send out announcements to RC-24 members by sending e-mail to isa-rc24@columbia.edu. If you would like more information, feel free to contact me at

drf2004@columbia.edu. And, if you would prefer that I send out announcements on your behalf, just e-mail them to me.

Please also keep me posted about upcoming conferences, calls for papers, and other announcements that you would like to share with the members of the RC-24 through the Newsletter. As I did with this Newsletter, I will send out an e-mail requesting information prior to going to press.

It was great meeting many of you at the World Congress in Durban. For those of you whom I have yet to meet, I hope that we have a chance to meet soon—perhaps at one of the many RC-24 conferences being scheduled in the near future.

The RC-24 Board (Elected 2006):

Executive:

President:	Raymond Murphy (Canada)
Vice-president:	Julia Guivant (Brazil)
Secretary:	Dana R. Fisher (USA)
Treasurer:	Matthias Gross (Germany)

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Past-president: Arthur Mol (The Netherlands)
Past-past-past-president: Riley Dunlap (USA)

Report from the World Congress in Durban

by **Riley E. Dunlap**, Past-past-past-president of the RC-24 (1994-98)

Department of Sociology
Oklahoma State University, USA

The Durban World Congress was perhaps the most distinctive of the five ISA Congresses that I have attended. This was because of the exceptionally high level of police presence stemming from the perceived (with some basis in reality) crime problem in Durban. Indeed, I've never experienced this kind of situation before, and I suspect that's true of most participants. The "crime problem" ended up having both positive and negative consequences.

On the negative side, I've never seen so little of a conference city as I did in Durban, and I know many others also felt constrained in terms of sight-seeing—although I also know that at least a few managed to take some rewarding (and in some cases not-so-rewarding) tours. The police were everywhere, sometimes even accompanying delegates on short shopping trips to a little “mall” just three blocks from the Hilton. And who can forget the night our RC-24 delegation of over 40 grew tired of waiting for a bus and starting walking to the beachfront bar for our “social hour,” only to end up having two police cars (one at the front and one bringing up the rear) escort us the entire way. Fortunately, all of our members survived Durban, and Fritz Reusswig even had his stolen laptop, taken from the room where our sessions were held during a coffee break, recovered by the police.

On the positive side, the constraints on sight-seeing, to say nothing of the innate appeal of our program, resulted in tremendous attendance at our sessions—the best overall I've ever seen. Every session I attended (and I confess I didn't make it to all 18 of them) had a very respectable attendance, typically with at least 30 people in the audience plus the panel members for evening sessions and substantially more for the afternoon sessions. Two sessions stand out in my mind for attendance. The excellent “theory” session organized and chaired by Gert Spaargaren had, by my count, 115 in the audience, even though headliner Ulrich Beck did not manage to attend.

While it was far from second place in terms of attendance, also impressive was the very last RC-24 session on the program, the large “roundtable” that Arthur Mol and Ray Murphy organized to accommodate the huge number of papers that could not be placed in one of the thematic sessions. Despite being scheduled on Saturday evening in the last possible time-slot on the program, when most RCs did not even have sessions scheduled, no less than nine presenters showed up and fortunately over close to 30 other diehard RC-24 members provided a very decent audience. What was even more amazing is that the presenters did a superb job of coping with the very short time periods Ray had to allot them. Thanks to all of participants for helping end our program on a very upbeat note.

The fact that we were one of the few RCs to have used all of our allotted 16 sessions, and then needed two more that were fortunately created by President Arthur Mol's efforts (a joint session and then the extra one for the roundtable), reflects the enthusiastic participation of members in the World Congress. We had over 140 papers on the program, with most of our regular 16 sessions including seven and sometimes eight papers. I don't know the precise number of presenters who managed to show up, but my sense is that despite the high cost of flights to Durban it was about three-fourths of those on the program, which I think is the historical norm.

As always, the presentations were of uneven quality, leading to some comments that we ought to be “more selective.” Thus far, RC-24 has followed a very inclusive philosophy, with most session chairs accepting virtually all submissions that seem appropriate in terms of subject matter on the program. While one can definitely make the case for being more selective, in practice this is difficult to implement. First, it's very hard to judge a final paper and especially an oral presentation on the basis of an abstract. Second, many abstract writers are not native English speakers, and in some cases they struggle to convey their thoughts adequately. Third, being “selective” could

easily translate into giving preference to submitters who have proven publication records, and end up greatly disadvantaging younger scholars and those new to the field. Thus, my own preference is to continue to err on the side of inclusiveness, and to have the RC-24 program include as many papers as possible. I recognize, of course, that all may not share this perspective.

Two advantages of being inclusive are that we end up with a large number of presenters attending RC-24 sessions and that we also encourage participation by younger scholars. I've already commented on our high level of participation, so let me just add that one of the positive features of the Durban Congress was that we had a large number of younger scholars participating in RC-24 for the first time. Indeed, some of the best presentations I heard were given by grad students new to RC-24. I think it's invaluable to have fresh faces and new minds join in and help keep RC-24 invigorated, and it was very rewarding to see so many new folks in Durban.

Finally, also reflecting on the very good health of RC-24 is the fact that our business meeting and subsequent social hour were very well attended. There were also many group dinners and drinking outings, indicative of the continuing high level of collegiality in our Research Committee. While it's always great to be able to socialize and renew old friendships and make new ones, it's also the case that sometimes productive collaborations (to say nothing of interesting intellectual exchanges) result from these social occasions.

In summary, despite the peculiar and less than hospitable setting provided by Durban, I feel that the 2006 World Congress was a very successful one for RC-24. We seem to be gaining momentum and members with each Congress, having grown into one of the largest and definitely most active Research Committees in the ISA in only twelve years since our formal "birth" in Bielefeld in 1994. Here's hoping that 2010 in Goteborg, Sweden proves to be our best Congress yet.

Report on the Frederick H. Buttel Award International Award for Distinguished Scholarship in Environmental Sociology

By **Pedro Roberto Jacobi**

Graduate Program of Environmental Sciences

University of São Paulo - Brazil

This award of the Research Committee on Environment and Society (RC-24) of the International Sociological Association (ISA) was established on March 17, 2005 to recognize outstanding contributions of scholars to the study of environment – society relations. Named in memory of Frederick H. Buttel, the award will be granted every four years.

The Award Committee was chaired by Raymond Murphy, University of Ottawa, Canada and its members represented three continents and five countries: Andrew Jamison, University of Aalborg, Denmark; Pedro Roberto Jacobi, University of Sao

Paulo, Brazil; Ryoichi Terada, Tsuru University; Japan and Maria Kousis, University of Crete, Greece. The deliberation process was designed in recognition of the need to establish good interactions among committee members. This was not easy work but, thanks to Raymond Murphy's dedication, deliberations went smoothly.

Each committee member received electronically and read the letters of nomination, the CVs, and any other information that was sent by the nominators and supporters. To come to a reasoned decision, the committee used university libraries and inter-library loan to try to track down and read the works the nominators indicated as that which motivated their nomination.

The committee had to make its choice among four candidates, all of whom had made significant contributions to environmental sociology in the last four years. The nominees were: Stewart Lockie, Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Arts, Health and Sciences and Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Central Queensland University, Australia; Michael Redclift, Professor of International Environmental Policy and Head, Environment, Politics, and Development Research Group, Department of Geography, King's College, University of London, United Kingdom; Eugene Rosa, Edward R. Meyer Distinguished Professor of Natural Resource and Environmental Policy and Professor of Sociology, Washington State University, USA; and Steven Yearley, Professor of Sociology, University of York, United Kingdom and Senior Research Fellow, Stockholm Environment Institute, Sweden. The decision was all the more difficult because the nominees' work represented some of the most important themes addressed by environmental sociologists conducting sociological investigation: rural sociology, the sociology of development and consumption, risk analysis, and the social study of science. As a result of the diversity of the work, the contributions were not easily comparable and the committee took great care to consider each nominee's work.

After very difficult deliberations, the committee selected Michael Redclift as the candidate who made the most outstanding contribution to the study of environment – society relations in the past four years. He was named the first recipient of the Frederick H. Buttell Award for Distinguished Scholarship in Environmental Sociology at the World Congress in Durban. In his research, Redclift successfully bridges many divides in environmental sociology. His work is both theoretically significant and empirically grounded, focusing on important contemporary problems that are crucial to the North and the South by using analysis that is historically deep and extremely well documented. Redclift's recent work develops an insightful critique of the fashionable conceptions of sustainable development. Congratulations Michael!

Upcoming Conferences and Calls for Papers

**Final Conference of "A Cognitive Approach to Rural Sustainable Development"
(CORASON)**

Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

18-19 January 2007

This conference involves a 12-country research project funded under the EU Framework Programme 6 ('Citizens' call). Contributions from invited speakers and CORASON Consortium members will address three themes: Sustainable Development as a European policy discourse; Changes in rural Europe; And knowledge in rural sustainable development; and there will be two panel presentations of case studies from the project. For further details please contact: Hilary Tovey (htovey@tcd) or Robert Mooney (Mooneyro@tcd.ie).

Risk and Response to Climate Change: Advocacy Networks, Stakeholder Participation and the use of Scientific Knowledge in Comparative National and Global Policy-Making

University of Minnesota, USA

25-27 January 2007

This research project is known by the acronym COMPON (Comparing Climate Change Policy Networks). The project is designed to assess hypotheses about social factors affecting the use of scientific information to establish risk assessment concerning climate change and make it into the basis of national and global policy responses. The working hypothesis argues for the positive effect of stakeholder participation upon the formation of advocacy networks for and the uptake of scientific information into policy content.

The research project will operate through co-investigators in various societies to collect comparable empirical data through the use of rigorously matched survey instruments in the "policy network" method and approach. The co-investigators of the project will each implement the survey in their respective society and will become co-authors of comparative publications. Currently we have about 10 societies in the sample. The first step of the project will be a two-day conference on this topic at the University of Minnesota, in January 2007.

People who would like to know more, or would like to participate in the project by conducting a societal case study, are invited to contact the organizer: Jeffrey Broadbent at broad001@umn.edu.

National Conference on Global Environmental Change, Spanish National Research Council CSIC, Madrid, Spain

25-27 April 2007

Organized by: The Spanish Committee on Global Environmental Change Research (CEICAG)

For more information contact:

Professor Mercedes Pardo, President of the Spanish Committee on Global Environmental Change Research (CEICAG)

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Beijing International Conference on Environmental Sociology
Reimin University of China, Beijing, China
29 June-July 1, 2007

In the past three decades China has enjoyed rapid economic growth that greatly improved the Chinese people's quality of life, but has also produced increasingly serious environmental deterioration. China's environmental problems have not only become a threat to the further growth of its economy and continuous improvement of quality of life for its people, but also a major contributor to global environmental deterioration. In response to this situation the Chinese government and Chinese academic scholars are becoming increasingly concerned with China's environmental situation, and building an "energy-efficient and environment-friendly society" has become a commonly expressed goal.

As one aspect of the increased Chinese attention to environmental issues, academic interest in the area of environmental sociology has begun and is developing steadily. To enhance this growing interest, a 2007 International Conference on Environmental Sociology will be held at Renmin University in Beijing from June 29 to July 1. With a broad focus on China's environmental situation, the conference has three objectives: (1) To help advance Chinese environmental sociology as an academic discipline, (2) To draw more international scholarly attention to China's environmental situation, and (3) To provide insights from environmental sociology as a means of developing better understandings of China's environmental situation.

Proposals for papers that contribute to these objectives are now being solicited. Papers that report the results of research conducted in China or on Chinese environmental problems and issues are particularly welcome, but a variety of papers will be accepted as long as they make a point of showing how the reported research and/or theoretical analyses can contribute to a better understanding of China's environmental situation.

For more information, contact Dayong Hong or Suocheng Li, at e-mail: social@ruc.edu.cn or hongdy@ruc.edu.cn or via phone (86-10-62511143) or Fax (86-10-62511143).

Journals and Calls for Submissions

Ambiente e Sociedade, a journal on Environment and Society, Brazil

We invite researchers to submit papers and subscribe to *Ambiente e Sociedade*, a journal on Environment and Society published in Brazil since 1997. The journal began as a publication of the Núcleo de Estudos e Pesquisas Ambientais (Nepam) from the State University of Campinas in São Paulo. Since 2000, it has become associated with the National Association of Graduate Programs and Research in Environment and Society - ANPPAS, and the editing house Annablume. It is published twice a year by researchers from several academic institutions that are specialized in the title-theme. It publishes scientific work from international and national collaborators involving a peer-review process. The journal has become the main channel of dissemination of ANPPAS.

Since the first issue, this journal is indexed in the ISSN, and more recently it has been accepted to be part of important international databases, such as International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS) and the All-Russian Institute of Scientific and Technical Information and Scielo – Scientific Electronic Library Online.

For more information, e-mail: revista@nepam.unicamp.br

Announcements

Peter Dickens of Cambridge University, received the 2006 "Outstanding Publication Award" from the American Sociological Association's Section on Environment and Technology at the annual meeting in Montreal, Canada in summer 2006. The award was based on his his book *Society and Nature: Changing our Environment, Change Ourselves*, published by Polity Press in 2004.

In July 2006, **Yukiko Kada**—a Japanese environmental sociologist who teaches at Kyoto Seika University—was elected the governor of Shiga Prefecture near Kyoto, Japan. Professor Kada is well known for her research on Lake Biwa and its environs. She won the election based on a multi-tiered platform of environmental protection. With her successful campaign, Kada has become the fifth female governor in Japan.

A new issue of *The Journal of Environment & Development* is now available.

The 1 June 2006; Vol. 15, No. 2 is available at:
<http://jed.sagepub.com/content/vol15/issue2/?etoc>

Articles included in this issue:

“Environmental Reform in Asia” by David A. Sonnenfeld and Arthur P. J. Mol

The Journal of Environment Development 2006; 15 107-111

“Environmental Reform in Asia: Comparisons, Challenges, Next Steps”

by David A. Sonnenfeld and Arthur P. J. Mol

A conference report is now available from the **XIV International Meeting of the Society for Human Ecology**. The conference featured a symposium that included many environmental sociologists working on macro-comparative analysis. The papers presented included:

"Structural Mismatch: Toward an Integrated Theory of Human Ecology and Political Economy." Thomas J. Burns, University of Oklahoma;

"Democracy and Sustainable Development" Indra de Soysa, Norwegian University of Science and Technology

"Approaches to Structural Human Ecology (SHE): The STIRPAT Research Program" Eugene A. Rosa, Washington State University and Richard York, University of Oregon

"Sustainability in Comparative Perspective" R. Scott Frey, Sociology, University of Tennessee

"Globalization, Foreign Investment, and the Environment: A Cross-National Investigation of Greenhouse Gas Emissions and other Air Pollutants" Andrew Jorgenson, Washington State University;

"Agricultural Exports and the Environment: A Cross-National Study of Fertilizer and Pesticide Consumption" Stefano Longo, University of Oregon and Richard York, University of Oregon;

"Creating 'Islands of Conservation' in Already Exploited Environments: a Comparative Analysis of Land Conservation in Suburbs and Biodiversity Conservation in Tropical Rain Forests" Thomas K. Rudel, Rutgers University

"Globalization and the Environment: Implications for Human Migration in Less-Developed Countries" Matthew R. Sanderson and Jeffrey Kentor, University of Utah;

"The Contradictory Nature of Globalization: The Effects of Political and Economic Integration on Water Pollution." John M. Shandra, SUNY Stonybrook and Bruce London, Clark University

Recent Member Publications and Talks

Stephen R Carpenter, Ruth DeFries, Thomas Dietz, Harold A Mooney, Stephen Polansky, Walter V Reid, and Robert J Scholes. 2006. "Millennium Ecosystem Assessment: Research Needs." *Science* 313:257-258.

Riley Dunlap of Oklahoma State University, gave an invited talk on "The Globalization of Citizen Concern for the Environment" as part of Stanford University's Center for Environmental Sciences and Policy lecture series in late September.

Dana R. Fisher. 2006. "Bringing the Material Back In: Understanding the United States Position on Climate Change." *Sociological Forum*. Number 3 (September).

Gert Spaargaren, Arthur P.J. Mol, and Frederick H. Buttel, editors. 2006. *Governing Environmental Flows: Global Challenges to Social Theory*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Membership Update

As of August 2006, the RC-24 had 157 members. Of this total, 135 people are full members of the International Sociological Association and 22 are RC-24 only members.

Please consult the RC-24 Website at:

www.environment-societyisa.org for other information about:

- How to become a member of the RC-24
- Previous Newsletters
- In Memoriam of Frederick H. Buttel
- Statutes

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