



International Sociological Association  
Research Committee on Environment and Society

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## President's Column

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by **Stewart Lockie**, President of RC-24  
Research School of Social Sciences  
College of Arts and Social Sciences  
The Australian National University, Canberra

Leading up to the UN Climate Change Conference in Durban this November it seems relevant to comment on recent political events in my own country. On 12 October 2012, the lower house of the Australian Parliament passed several pieces of legislation designed to put a price on greenhouse gas emissions. A fixed price of AUS\$23/tonne carbon dioxide equivalent will be imposed from 1 July 2012, transitioning to a floating price in 2015. The Labor minority government, with support from the Greens and independent MPs, stood up to a barrage of criticism from the Murdoch media, peak industry groups and the conservative opposition. Speaking before the final vote, Prime Minister Julia Gillard implored the Parliament to 'stand on the side of history. Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbot, declared the following day: 'This is a pledge in blood. This tax will go.' Opinion polls suggest that unless there is a radical turnaround in the Government's electoral fortunes over the next two years, he will receive a clear mandate to honour this pledge.

The divisiveness of climate policy in this country, like many others, has been extraordinary. Australian politicians opposed to climate action are, for the most part, reluctant to question 'the science' of climate change. They prefer to defend the rights of shock jocks, conspiracy theorists, pseudo-experts and vested interest groups to free speech while peddling their own hysterical claims about the economic catastrophe awaiting any country that 'goes it alone' on emissions reductions. The combination of idiocy and opportunism is astounding. Yet it has delayed serious policy responses and may well undermine those responses that have been made. This is not, of course, unique to Australia. You have all seen it and we may well see it again in Durban.

The polarization of climate politics creates a powerful disincentive to engage critically with climate policy. Few of us would want to feed the denialist and obstructionist causes. Even economists concerned solely with improving the efficacy of proposed policy are misquoted as critics of climate action. Yet the market-driven approach to climate policy that dominates Kyoto Protocol implementation mechanisms and most national responses is limited in a number of important ways. Environmental policy has been re-cast as the next great phase of economic reform, the key to ensuring continued growth in employment, wealth and living standards into

the next century. This is obviously an attractive framing of the problem and, in terms of reducing the carbon intensity of economic activity, it may well work. One of my chief reservations concerns the potential to crowd out dimensions of environmental change and its consequences that are less readily amenable to market-based intervention; issues that are hard to translate and contain within clearly defined property rights and trading mechanisms. There is a naïve sociology, to borrow a concept of Brian Wynne's, embedded within climate policy that warrants scrutiny and debate.

Environmental sociologists and our colleagues in cognate disciplines are, of course, engaging critically and constructively with climate and other dimensions of global environmental change. We have not abandoned the field! But there is much to be done. RC24 and national/regional associations for environmental sociology have critical roles to play in progressing the sociological research agenda on environmental change through both capacity building among our members and through the promotion of environmental sociological research beyond our membership. At the same time, we are small organizations with few resources other than the combined intellect and enthusiasm of our members.

Within this newsletter you will find further information on upcoming RC24 activities such as our participation in the 2012 ISA World Forum of Sociology. Let me also take this opportunity to encourage all our members to consider hosting or participating in national or regional meetings affiliated with RC24. Where possible, RC24 will provide small travel grants and publicity so please contact the Board to discuss any plans you may be developing. We are, of course, open to all your ideas concerning the promotion of environmental sociology so please feel free to discuss these with us at any time.

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## Notes from the Editors

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by **Mikael Klintman** (Research Policy Institute, Lund University, Sweden) & **Magnus Boström** (Dept. of Life Sciences, Södertörn University, Sweden)  
**Co-Secretaries of RC-24 and Editors of the Newsletter**

Nowadays, it is almost a truism to mention that environmental problems are becoming more and more global. Aside from analyzing the global issues intensively covered in media, such as climate change, we as sociologists are keen on pointing out connections between global environmental impacts and daily trifles, such as the cup of coffee that right now helps us write these words. Every trained environmental sociologist should be able to list ten different aspects about how private and local activities have an impact on global structures and processes. There is hardly any introductory course or lecture in environmental sociology that does not address globalization. Still, while we as sociologists consider us experts in thinking and analyzing through global glasses, the challenges in developing research collaboration, projects, common agendas, shared understandings of various topics, communication forums, and so on remain substantial. To a large extent we still do our things “at home”, and in the Swedish, German, South African, Australian, Japanese, Argentinean way, don't we? Our research funders tell us to do so, don't they?

For the last 40 years RC24 has played a very useful role improving the understanding of the interconnectedness of local and global issues. RC24 literally connects people from the entire planet. RC24 members debate about common problems, use common concepts, and create

fruitful links across scholars and places. This may in turn benefit several steps of the research process, from problem framing to publication. This very RC24 Newsletter reflects results from such productive collaboration. We hope and believe RC24 could play an even more critical role in this sense. There are lots of environmental sociologists out there (or people who might not label themselves as such but shares an interest in environmental sociology) in different countries and regions, people not yet associated with RC24. We encourage all RC24 members to invite (read: recruit) these people by encouraging them to become members of the undogmatic, global community that RC24 is.

Moreover, as editors, we kindly ask all of you readers to continue helping us make the list serve and the Newsletter useful. You do this by communicating with us about any relevant news about upcoming events, vacant positions, new publications, etc, that we in turn spread worldwide through the above-mentioned forums. Moreover, please continue to visit the RC24 website, at [www.environment-societyisa.org](http://www.environment-societyisa.org). We should also take the opportunity to remind everyone that the very basis for the Research Community on Environment and Society is paid memberships. Those of you who haven't renewed your RC24 membership, please do so right away!

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## Review

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By **Stewart Lockie**

The Australian National University, Canberra

**Book: Schandl, H. et al (2011) *Resource Efficiency: Economics and Outlook for Asia-Pacific (REEO)*. Published by the United Nations Environment Program.**

I recently spoke at the launch of a new UNEP report, *Resource Efficiency: Economics and Outlook for Asia-Pacific (REEO)*. The multidisciplinary team behind REEO undertook a primarily quantitative analysis of resource use and resource use intensity in the Asia-Pacific region from 1970 to 2005; mapping flows of energy and materials against population and economic development and projecting scenarios out to 2050.

The economic and industrial transformation currently underway in the Asia-Pacific is unparalleled in human history. Importantly, the partial de-coupling of economic growth from material production in many countries outside the region is largely the result of manufacturing and waste generation shifting from Europe and the US into the Asia-Pacific. The region is already the world's largest user of natural resources and is likely to consume half the world's energy by 2028. Between 1990 and 2005, greenhouse gas emissions increased 60%. Business as usual will see resource use in the region increase three to five-fold by 2050. Making use of all technological potential for efficiency within existing systems will still see resource use and greenhouse gas emissions more than double.

The challenge this presents for achieving both poverty reduction and environmental sustainability is immense. As the REEO report argues, transformational technologies are needed, but they will not be sufficient. Transforming the ways we live, work and move will require us to consider more fundamental questions about what we value and aspire to.

While REEO reviews policy options for the promotion of efficiency, the question of how to facilitate a more fundamental reconsideration of economic development and the aspirations on

which it is based is, in my view, left hanging. I do not raise this as a criticism. The REEO report raises questions for which there are clearly no easy answers. This report ought, I think, inspire reflection and debate among the rest of us concerning the research agenda for sustainability.

*Resource Efficiency: Economics and Outlook for Asia-Pacific (REEO)* is available at:  
[www.unep.org/publications/contents/pub\\_details\\_search.asp?ID=6217](http://www.unep.org/publications/contents/pub_details_search.asp?ID=6217)

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## **Upcoming Conferences (in chronological order)**

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### **Meeting of Anppas – National Association of Graduate Studies and Research on Environment and Society**

Belem do Para, Brazil.

18-21 September 2012

For instructions and details, please see <http://www.anppas.org.br>

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### **International Meeting on Water Governance in São Paulo**

São Paulo, Brazil, University of São Paulo.

7-9 February 2012,

- a) Water Security and Vulnerability
- b) Water and Payment of Ecosystemic Services
- c) Innovation in Water Governance
- d) Climate Change Natural Disasters and Risk Communication in Water Governance

For instructions and details, please see <http://www.usp.br/procam>

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### **Leuphana Sustainability Summit – Enabling a Transdisciplinary Approach**

Lüneburg, Germany

29th February – 2nd March 2012,

**The deadline for abstract submission is 7 November 2011.**

The institutionalization of sustainability as a regulative idea has only started in some spheres of activity and some areas of the world. To achieve transitions towards sustainability, continuous

inquiry, learning, and adaptation is needed. And this requires science to go beyond disciplinary – and even interdisciplinary – approaches. By bringing about mutual learning, collaborative research, and problem solving among business, government and civil society, transdisciplinarity can serve as an important guiding concept for sustainability science and practice. Over the last 10 years, progress has been made to better understand and design the interface between sustainability science and transdisciplinarity. The conference focuses on three leading questions:

1. What insights about the role of transdisciplinarity for sustainability transitions have we gained over the last 10 years?
2. What gaps in research still remain?
3. How can we fill these gaps?

These guiding questions will focus the debates in workshops, plenary and parallel sessions in four topical areas: Biodiversity, Global Sustainability, Education, and Corporate Sustainability. At the conference leading researchers, particularly in sustainability, and high-level decision-makers will meet in a transdisciplinary setting with a goal of creating new insights to help move sustainability forward. Keynote speakers from civil society, politics, and business will be among others: Angelika Zahrt (RNE, BUND/former chairwoman), Kersten-Karl Barth (Director Sustainability Siemens AG), Frank-Walter Steinmeier (Social Democratic Party of Germany, tbc).

**More information on the conference will be continuously posted soon at our website:**

<http://www.leuphana.de/sustainability-summit>

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## **Second ISA forum of sociology**

Buenos Aires, Argentina

1-4 August 2012

**Research Committee on Environment and Society, RC24 on Environmental justice, citizenship, and governance:**

**Programme coordinator, RC24:**

Stewart Lockie, The Australian National University, Australia, [stewart.lockie@anu.edu.au](mailto:stewart.lockie@anu.edu.au)

**RC24 Liaison in Argentina**

Melina Tobias, Universidad de Buenos Aires, [melina.tobias@gmail.com](mailto:melina.tobias@gmail.com)

### **Call for abstracts**

The Research Committee on Environment and Society, RC24, invites **members to submit abstracts** for the 2012 World Forum. We are particularly interested in abstracts proposals that engage with the Forum theme of social justice and democratization. However, abstracts are welcome on all topics of interest to members in the broad field of environment and society.

## Deadlines

- On-line abstract submission from August 25 to **December 15, 2011**.
- All Forum participants (presenters, chairs, discussants, etc.) need to pay the early registration fee by April 10, 2012, in order to be included in the programme. If not registered, their names will not appear in the Programme or Abstracts Book.
- On-line registration will open August 25, 2011.

## Proposed sessions (16 sessions are allocated)

Please visit <http://www.isa-sociology.org/buenos-aires-2012/rc/rc.php?n=RC24>

**Please observe:** Only abstracts submitted through [ISA website platform](http://isaconf.confex.com/isaconf/forum2012/cfp.cgi) will be considered, at <http://isaconf.confex.com/isaconf/forum2012/cfp.cgi>

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## Workshop on Energy and Society

Lisbon, Portugal, at the University of Lisbon (Instituto de Ciências Sociais)

22-24 March 2012

### Contact for submission, information and registration:

Ana Horta  
Instituto de Ciências Sociais  
Universidade de Lisboa  
R. Prof. Anibal de Bettencourt, 9  
1600-189 Lisboa – Portugal  
Tel.: 00 351 217804700  
E-mail: [ana.horta@ics.ul.pt](mailto:ana.horta@ics.ul.pt)

### Deadlines:

Abstract submission: November 10, 2011

Notification of acceptance: December 15, 2011

Registration: January 31, 2012

Workshop: March 22-24, 2012

This workshop aims to bring together the state-of-the-art research and thinking in this area, providing insights that may contribute to a better understanding of these questions. Bringing together scholars from Europe and elsewhere that are interested and/or currently working on social aspects of energy issues, this workshop intends to promote the formal constitution of the international network “**Energy and Society**” founded in 2010 by researchers in this emerging field of study. The workshop also intends to provide an opportunity for researchers to connect with others interested in international research and collaboration in this area. We encourage submissions on a wide variety of topics within the scope of energy and society (click the weblink below),

Abstracts should be sent as a MS Word attachment to [ana.horta@ics.ul.pt](mailto:ana.horta@ics.ul.pt). The attachment should include: abstract title; author's name and affiliation; short biography of author; abstract. Please indicate "Abstract submission" in the subject line of your e-mail.

For further details about the workshop, see <http://www.eceee.org/calendar/2012/workshop-on-energy-society>

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## **Jobs, Volumes, and Calls for Submissions/Participation**

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### **Calls for submissions:**

**Nature, science, and politics, or: policy assessment to promote sustainable development?**

#### **Special Symposium *Nature and Culture***

##### **Guest editors:**

Vivien Behrens, Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ  
John Turnpenny, School of Environmental Sciences, University of East Anglia  
Sabine Weiland, Environmental Policy Research Centre, FU Berlin

Abstracts (400-500 words) of contributions to this Special Symposium of *Nature and Culture* should be submitted **by 30 November 2011 to the editors:** ([Sabine.weiland@fu-berlin.de](mailto:Sabine.weiland@fu-berlin.de), [Vivien.behrens@ufz.de](mailto:Vivien.behrens@ufz.de), [J.Turnpenny@uea.ac.uk](mailto:J.Turnpenny@uea.ac.uk)).

##### **Deadlines:**

Deadline for abstract submissions 30 November 2011  
Notification of selected papers 15 December 2011  
Full papers due 1 May 2012  
Reviews due 30 June 2012  
Revised versions due 1 September 2012  
Final versions manuscripts to publisher 12 November 2012  
Publication spring 2013

Ecological challenges are becoming more and more complex and affecting nature and society. To face these challenges and to mitigate possible negative future impacts sustainable development is called for. One of the problems confronting sustainable development lies in the complexity, uncertainty and the long-term nature of possible impacts (Newig et al. 2008). Knowledge about the various impacts a policy might have—be they ecological, economic or social—is therefore pivotal.

The focus of this Special Symposium will be on empirical work and case studies that elaborate on the following questions: How are knowledge production and decision making processes interrelated and intermingled? What is the relationship between evidence use and political

outputs? How can better evidence or evidence-use processes help to achieve more sustainable outcomes? Our aim is to move beyond apolitical, one-directional knowledge transfer models that still inform much of the debate on evidence-based policy making. At the same time, the gravity of these linear models is remarkable and in need of explanation. We invite empirical as well as conceptual contributions to this Special Symposium that make use of the above mentioned and other approaches to science-politics interaction that shed light on the issue of policy assessment and evidence-based policy making in the field of sustainable development. Another focus could be on methods to build bridges, as in concepts of co-production, boundary spanning, and transdisciplinarity. Special attention should be paid to the role of ‘nature’ in this interaction—as hard natural science, as a solid boundary to protect science’s authoritative claims, in relation to the natural core of socio-ecological systems, and so on. What can we learn from these approaches to better understand science-policy interaction and eventually better conduct policy assessments that are supportive of sustainable development?

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## **Announcements (in alphabetical order)**

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**Riley Dunlap, Regents Professor of Sociology at Oklahoma State University**, has been appointed the Laurence L. and Georgia Ina Dresser Professor. The Dresser Professorship is an endowed chair that was just established in OSU's Department of Sociology.

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### **Boeing Distinguished Professorship Symposium for Eugene Rosa at Washington State University, 24 September 2011**

Sponsored by the Washington State University Sociology Department and the Thomas S. Foley Institute for Public Policy and Public Service, a day-long symposium was held in connection with **the selection of Eugene (Gene) Rosa as the Boeing Distinguished Professor of Environmental Sociology**. The professorship, established through a grant from the Boeing Company, is to recognize a social scientist with a national and international reputation for outstanding scholarship on environmental issues. He is a recognized leader in the field of environmental and technological risk and in understanding the social drivers in coupled human and natural systems. The symposium, organized by Thomas Dietz, Professor of Sociology and Environmental Science and Policy and Assistant Vice President for Environmental Research at Michigan State University, featured internationally renowned scholars from the United States and Abroad. The program consisted of four panels representing the four complementary research areas of Professor Rosa’s research.

#### **Risk Panel**

Ortwin Renn, University of Stuttgart, *Risk and Uncertainty: Challenges for Risk Governance* (via Skype)

Roger Kasperson, Clark University, *An Integrative Framework for Risk Assessment, Vulnerability Analysis and Resilience Building*

Paul Stern, U.S. National Research Council/ National Academy of Sciences, *Design Principles for Governing Emerging Risks*

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Issues Panel**

Steve Fuller, University of Warwick, *The posthuman challenge to ecological correctness* (via YouTube)

Richard York, University of Oregon, *Metatheoretical foundations of post-normal prediction*

### **Energy Panel**

Allan Mazur, Syracuse University, *He Gene, where did you get all that energy?*

Rachael Shworm, Rutgers University, *Social theory and energy transitions: Challenges and Insights*

### **Structural Human Ecology Panel**

Andrew Jorgenson, University of Utah, *Population, Affluence, and Greenhouse Gas Emissions: The Continuing Significance of Structural Human Ecology*

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## **Recent Member Books (in alphabetical order)**

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**Magnus Boström and Mikael Klintman, 2011 in (more affordable) paperback (previously available in hardback). *Eco-Standards, Product Labelling and Green Consumerism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.**

As conscientious consumers, we have become overwhelmed with alarms about food contamination, over-fishing, clear-felled forests, loss of biodiversity, climate change, chemical pollution, and other environmental and health-related risks. This book is an analysis of a primary set of tools aimed at dealing with these risks: green labels and other eco-standards. The authors address political, regulatory, discursive, and organizational circumstances and raise the questions: how can ecological complexities be translated into a trustworthy and categorical label? Is there a mismatch between the production and consumption of green labels? Is it possible to achieve broad public participation in environmental issues through labelling? This is a timely book that provides a social and policy-oriented analysis of the challenges for green consumerism through green labelling.

For information on this book, see

<http://www.palgrave.com/products/title.aspx?pid=529392>

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**Michael Gismondi and Debra J. Davidson, *Challenging Legitimacy at the Precipice of Energy Calamity*, London: Springer.**

This is one of very few sociological analyses of the Alberta tar sands—an enterprise warranting much closer scrutiny from academe than it has received to date. We do two things in this book. First, we take a good hard look at the tar sands from the broader context of peak oil and climate change, and conclude without much trouble that this form of development just doesn't add up. Second, we analyze the frames, images and narratives that are used to legitimize this enterprise and the potential sources of weakness in those frames, and also the frames and narratives that are used to oppose it, and their potential to unseat legitimacy. We conclude that the legitimacy of the

tar sands (and its state and industrial proponents) is fragile, but concerned citizens and organizations making up the resistance may not be capitalizing on those sources of fragility as well as they might. We situate this political moment in a complex systems framework, drawing on contemporary theory and critical perspectives on complexity/mobility, political ecology, human geography, legitimacy, citizenship, environmental sociology and discourse analysis.

For information on this book, see

<http://www.springer.com/environment/book/978-1-4614-0286-2>

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**William T. Markham, 2011 in (more affordable) paperback (previously available in hardback). *Environmental Organizations in Modern Germany: Hardy Survivors in the Twentieth Century and Beyond.***

German environmental organizations have doggedly pursued environmental protection through difficult times: hyperinflation and war, National Socialist rule, postwar devastation, state socialism in the GDR, and confrontation with the authorities during the 1970s and 1980s. The author recounts the fascinating and sometimes dramatic story of these organizations from their origins at the end of the nineteenth century to the present, not only describing how they reacted to powerful social movements, including the homeland protection and socialist movements in the early years of the twentieth century, the Nazi movement, and the anti-nuclear and new social movements of the 1970s and 1980s, but also examining strategies for survival in periods like the current one, when environmental concerns are not at the top of the national agenda. Previous analyses of environmental organizations have almost invariably viewed them as parts of larger social structures, that is, as components of social movements, as interest groups within a political system, or as contributors to civil society. This book, by contrast, starts from the premise that through the use of theories developed specifically to analyze the behavior of organizations and NGOs we can gain additional insight into why environmental organizations behave as they do.

For information on this book, see

[https://www.berghahnbooks.com/extras/docs/flyer/MarkhamEnvironmental\\_9780857451729.html](https://www.berghahnbooks.com/extras/docs/flyer/MarkhamEnvironmental_9780857451729.html)

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**Peter Oosterveer and David A. Sonnenfeld, 2011. *Food, Globalization and Sustainability.* London; Earthscan.**

This book provides an overview of the principal conceptual frameworks that have been developed for understanding these changes. It shows how conventional regulation of food provision through sovereign national governments is becoming elusive, as the distinctions between domestic and international, and between public and private spheres, disappear. At the same time multinational companies and supranational institutions put serious limits to governmental interventions. In this context, other social actors including food retailers and NGOs are shown to take up innovative roles in governing food provision, but their contribution to agro-food sustainability is under continuous scrutiny. The authors apply these themes in several detailed case studies, including organic, fair trade, local food and fish. On the basis of

these cases, future developments are explored, with a focus on the respective roles of agricultural producers, retailers and consumers.

For information on this book, see

<http://www.earthscan.co.uk/?TabId=102827&v=513680>

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## Recent Member Articles, Special Issues & Conference Proceedings

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**Journal Ambiente e Sociedade, edited by Anppas – National Association of Graduate Studies and Research on Environment and Society.** Volume 3 no.2 is available at [www.scielo.br/asoc](http://www.scielo.br/asoc). Volume 14 no. 1 will be available at same address mid November. The journal is available in digital only.

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**Dunlap, Riley E. and McCright, Aaron M. (2011).** “Organized Climate-Change Denial.” Pp. 144-160 in J. S. Dryzek, R. B. Norgaard and D. Schlosberg, (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society*. New York: Oxford University Press.

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**Jaeger, Carlo C. Tàbara, Joan David, and Jaeger Julia (2011).** European Research on Sustainable Development. Vol I: *Transformative science approaches for Sustainable Development*. Heidelberg, Germany: Springer and European Commission.

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**Lidskog, Rolf & Elander, Ingemar (2011).** “Le développement durable en Suède : la rhétorique, les politiques et la pratique”, *Telescope. Revue d’analyse comparée en administration publique* 17(2): 71-91.  
[[www.telescope.enap.ca/Telescope/docs/Index/Vol\\_17\\_no2/Telv17n2\\_lidskog\\_elande.pdf](http://www.telescope.enap.ca/Telescope/docs/Index/Vol_17_no2/Telv17n2_lidskog_elande.pdf)]

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**Lidskog, Rolf (2011).** “Regulating Nature: Public Understanding and Moral Reasoning”, *Nature and Culture* 6(2): 149-167.

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**Lidskog, Rolf, Ugglå, Ylva & Soneryd, Linda (2011).** “Making Transboundary Risks Governable: Reducing Complexity, Constructing Identities and Ascribing Capabilities”, *Ambio. A Journal of the Human Environment*, special issue on *Coping with Complexity in Baltic Sea Risk Governance*, 40(2): 111-120.

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**McCright, Aaron M. and Dunlap, Riley E. (2011).** “Cool Dudes: The Denial of Climate Change among Conservative White Males.” *Global Environmental Change* 21: 1163-1172.

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**Ojala, Maria & Lidskog, Rolf (2011)** “What Lies Beneath the Surface? A Case Study of Citizens’ Moral Reasoning with Regard to Biodiversity”, *Environmental Values* 20(2): 217-237

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**Stoddart, Mark C.J. (2011)**. “If We Wanted to be Environmentally Sustainable, We’d Take the Bus”: Skiing, Mobility and the Irony of Climate Change. *Human Ecology Review* 18(1): 19-29.

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**Tabara, Joan David and Miller, Doug. (2011)**. “Reframing public opinion on climate change”. In: Jaeger, C. C., Hasselmann, K., Leipold, G., Mangalagiu, D. , and Tabara, J. D., *Reframing the Problem of Climate Change: From Zero Sum Game to Win-Win Solutions*. Oxon, UK, New York, USA & Canada: Earthscan.

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## The RC-24 Board 2010-2014

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**For more information, Please consult the RC-24 Website at:**

**[www.environment-societyisa.org](http://www.environment-societyisa.org) for information about:**

- How to become a member of the RC-24
- Previous Newsletters
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