

***LEGITIMATING IMPOTENCE:
PYRRHIC VICTORIES OF THE MODERN ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT****

QUALITATIVE SOCIOLOGY

Special issue:

**Social Equity and Environmental Activism:
Utopias, Dystopias and Incrementalism**

MARCH 1993

**Kenneth A. Gould
Department of Sociology
St. Lawrence University
Canton, NY 13617**

**Adam S. Weinberg & Allan Schnaiberg
Department of Sociology
Northwestern University
Evanston, IL 60208**

*Some portions of this paper were presented to colleagues at Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, in May 1991; the Universidad Internacional Menendez Pelayo, in Valencia, Spain, March 1992; and the annual meetings of the American Sociological Association in Pittsburgh, PA, August 1992. The editorial assistance of Cathleen Ann is gratefully acknowledged, though responsibility for any residual confusion remains ours.

Abstract

The strengths and limitations of the modern environmental movement are assessed, using a contextual analysis, with a framework drawn from pragmatic analysis. Empirical summaries from recent policy-making supported by the movement: in community-based recycling, local toxic waste movements, and water pollution control document the fact that the movement has indeed developed some "sustainable resistance" in policy-making in the U.S. and at the Rio Conference. But it has also ignored those consequences of "environmental protection" which degrade the living conditions for many people of color and other low-income groups. The movement's failure to form enduring coalitions for linking environmental protection to social justice limits the movement's power, by permitting disempowered groups to be mobilized in opposition to environmental protection. We outline an alternative strategy, built around "sustainable legitimacy", which will require changes in the composition and program of environmental movement organizations.

Key words: Environmental movements; Social justice; Environmental justice; Rio Conference; Environmental coalitions

THE DUALITY OF 'THE ENVIRONMENTAL STRUGGLE'

Twenty-five years since the rise of a modern "environmental movement" (Lowe & Rudig, 1987; Schnaiberg, 1980: ch. VIII). The twentieth anniversary of Earth Day and the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment have come and gone. The United States has a Vice-President who is an "environmentalist." And this paper is now being written a year after the "Earth Summit", the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development [UNCED] in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Newhouse, 1992; Adler & Hager, 1992).

At this point in history, we may conclude that the modern environmental movement has been a startling success (Dunlap & Mertig, 1992; Milbrath, 1984; Lowe & Goyde, 1983). Conversely, we may also conclude that it has been an abysmal failure (Hecht &

Cockburn, 1992; Lash et al., 1984). Both of these conclusions are valid, depending upon the criteria upon which success or failure is measured and evaluated. Reports of the success of the environmental movement have been far more visible than reports of failure (e.g., Milbrath, 1984; Short, 1984; Morrison, 1986; Linn & Vining, 1992; Dunlap, 1987). This is due, in part, to the relatively higher social rewards attached to reports of good news. It also stems from the political importance of environmental groups claiming success, as well as from political leaders who want to claim pro-environmental records (e.g., Gore, 1992; Dowie, 1992; Goldman, 1992; Gould, 1991a, 1992c; Little, 1992).

Here we attempt to examine the variation in the dimensions along which success has been evaluated: to reveal how this heterogeneity results in the rather different conclusions of social movement success or failure in the literature. We then attempt to resolve this duality, drawing upon sociological research traditions to clarify social movement goals, strategies, and opportunities. Drawing upon on our own empirical work on environmental movements, we develop a set of concepts that allows us to refine generalized principles about the relationship between the environment, the economy, and the society. In doing so, we hope to point researchers toward a more reliable basis for the evaluation of social movement success, and a more "sustainable" trajectory for social movement deeds than for words.

The importance and problems associated with our task are most apparent in the context of the recent summit in Rio. At the summit, two major departures from most previous broad environmental conferences were noteworthy: (1) issues of *global* environmental problems, even beyond the previous scope of *international* problems such as regulation of whaling, were high on the multinational agenda at Rio; and (2) both official and non-official sessions at the Rio conference referred to *socioeconomic* concerns as an *integral component* of environmental protection. These largely revolved around the recent attention given to the "sustainable development" concept (Gore, 1992;

Easterbrook, 1992; Begley, 1992; Burke, 1992; Bidwai, 1992; McLaughlin, 1993; Milbrath, 1992; Newhouse, 1992).

From this global overview, it seems irrefutable that those favoring environmental protection have advanced this struggle over the past two and a half decades. It appears that the last third of the 20th century will be viewed by future historians as the "environmentalist epoch" (Hays, 1985). Just as former President George Bush strongly asserted at the Rio Conference that "America is the leading environmental nation," others assert that this recent period is one where "environmentalism has taken the lead on the public agenda." Strikingly, however, the meaning of these statements changes when placed within their context. Bush's speech was very aggressive around the theme of environmentalism precisely because the U.S. refused to sign a global biodiversity protection agreement, and had diluted an agreement aimed at reducing carbon dioxide emissions to decrease the hazards of global warming. This contradiction between words and deeds is at the heart of our analysis. Each of the authors have intensively and extensively analyzed a number of specific environmental conflicts -- ranging from energy conservation, waste recycling, air and water pollution, toxic waste control, and wetland protection -- at local, regional, national, and international levels. From each has arisen an overview which vacillates between stressing environmental movement successes and failures. More to the point, we have observed a preponderance of losses by "environmentalists" in concrete struggles at all of these levels, over the past decade especially, despite the alleged "revitalization" of the movement proclaimed by many (e.g., Dunlap & Mertig, 1992; Milbrath, 1984, 1992).

Thus, there are **two** stories one can tell about the past 25 years. The *optimistic* one begins with the spate of U.S. environmental legislation in the 1968-72 period (Landy, Roberts, & Thomas, 1990). It continues with the rise of an international movement for "appropriate technology" and the "limits to growth" movements (Frahm & Buttel, 1982; Morrison, 1980), and the presence of student, grass-roots and large multinational interest

groups of the late 1980s (Brown & Mikkelsen, 1990; Gould, 1991; Lowe & Goyde, 1983; Bukro, 1991; Morris, 1992). It reaches a crescendo with the 1987 Bruntland Commission report on "sustainable development" (World Commission on Environment & Development, 1987; Bruntland, 1989; Ayres, 1989; Davis, 1991), the 1992 Rio conference on global environmentalism (Adler & Hager, 1992), and the election of Al Gore to the Vice Presidency of the United States. This scenario almost always includes new controls on air and water pollution, heightened regulation and clean-up of toxic wastes, protection of endangered species, and the process of *environmental impact assessment* as an enduring component of public (and much private) sector decision-making (Dietz & Rycroft, 1984; Dietz *et al.*, 1986; Ayres, 1989; Farver & Glaeser, 1979; Frahm & Buttel, 1982; Glaeser, 1984; Gore, 1992).

In very sharp contrast is the *pessimistic* overview. During this same period, we have increases in: species extinction world-wide, acid rainfall and forest destruction in industrial nations, deforestation in large parts of the developing world, and desertification in much of the developing world, arising from agricultural and extractive investments (Falkenmark, 1990; Vaahtorantz, 1990; Ramade, 1989; Stonich, 1990; Illich, 1989; Hecht & Cockburn, 1992). Inequalities between industrial and third world countries have intensified pressures on primary producers, leading to accelerated processes of ecosystem extraction for subsistence and exports (Pradwai, 1992; Schnaiberg & Gould, 1994; Goldman, 1992; During, 1989; Court, 1990). In addition, we have observed new patterns of increased international radiation through atmospheric flows following the Chernobyl accident in the Ukraine, and high casualties from the Bhopal toxic chemical release in India. Moreover, the global warming assertions and ozone depletion scenarios that were tentatively accepted by some natural scientists a decade ago appear to have garnered more scientific consensus in 1992 (Gore, 1992; cf. Burke, 1992; Begley, 1992). Global animal and human populations are now perceived to be at increased risk for skin cancers, due to ozone "holes" and the subsequent global rise of ultraviolet radiation.

All of this suggests a duality at the Rio Conference. Recent decades have seen such a **rise in environmental problems** that a kind of **global epidemic** is now perceived to be occurring (Gore 1992). Thus, the good news that the conference has occurred is simultaneously the bad news about global ecological structure (Hecht & Cockburn, 1992; Ramade, 1989;. The pace of the increase in environmental problems has out-stripped the pace of the increase in global responses to these problems (Wad *et al.*, 1991).

When analyzing both the optimistic and pessimistic scenarios, we must distinguish between a *report of a global epidemic* and a *global epidemic of reports* . Moreover, one must also remember that this analytic history is especially clouded by the politics of official and unofficial *reporting* . In this paper, we cut through this Gordian knot by eschewing any effort at a "bottom line" for the environmental movement. We accept both optimistic and pessimistic scenarios, but integrate them in a somewhat more reflective model of a conflict trajectory (Begley, 1992; Smith, 1992; Schnaiberg, 1986b; Schnaiberg *et al.*, 1986). Drawing on our own research, the larger literature on environmentalism, and some classical sociological research traditions, we present a contextualized interpretation of the movement. From this contextualized analysis, we develop a set of concepts that allows us to refine generalized principles about the relationship between the environment, the economy, and the society.

METHODS: THE LOGIC BEHIND THE NARRATIVE APPROACH

This paper uses pragmatic philosophical tools to develop a sociological narrative about the environmental movement (see, among others, Gunn, 1989, 1992; Anderson, 1990; Rorty, 1982, 1989; Dewey, 1922, 1927, 1939; Weinberg, 1993). The term "sociological narrative" refers to a method of inquiry that utilizes grounded observations to map the patterns of relationships and resources in a particular place, at a particular time, in order to debunk and reveal social arrangements which have been hidden by

institutional and structural arrangements. Chart 1 contrasts this pragmatic approach with the more conventional work in environmental sociology.

CHART 1 ABOUT HERE

This approach is a self-reflective process that situates rigorously-collected and analyzed data within pre-existing literatures. It creates alternative versions, which challenge readers to examine his/her belief structures. This debunking relies most heavily on the use of socially relevant concepts, which bring us back into everyday experience, and make us look for differences between theoretical forms and experiential substance (James 1907:96). In other words, these concepts offer alternative images, explanations and arguments which probe the utility of our dominant symbols and theories. They reveal new versions of why things happen the way they do, and ultimately provide grounded assessments of the ramifications of current social arrangements and practices.

This method is steeped in a conception of science as a self-reflective process that continuously questions its own methods, theories, and standards of evaluation. It is the science or craft of "learning to learn" (Shapere, 1984) by gathering information on a topic. By using existing texts and literatures, but revising the signs and symbols previously used to talk about this topic, it offers a new set of signs, symbols, and concepts. For our purposes, the narrative must meet the following criteria. First, a social narrative must be relevant. That is, it must be a contextualized, local story about what happened at a particular place at a particular time. It interprets and describes. Uniquely, this criterion stresses precisely those elements which have been hidden in previous studies, and downplays those which have been widely-accepted. It embraces, in short, a perspective of a multitude of truths. Each narrative seeks to add one more truth, based on grounded observations and developed through the sociological imagination (Mills 1959).

Second, a social narrative must also be interesting. The narrative must challenge the intended audience to re-think previously held assumptions about the topic. To fulfill this criterion, it must first push the boundaries of what is accepted about the topic. As such, it must work within, challenge, or contribute to a major intellectual debate. If it does not do so, then it will not be interesting enough to entice others to rethink their assumptions.

Finally, the narrative must matter. It must have a consequence. It is the consequences that provides benchmarks for assessment of the usefulness (or "truth") of these new versions. Two types of consequences are of prime importance. First, how well does it fit with the rest of our experiences? And, thus, how well does it fit within the rest of the assumptions we make about the world? Second, what would be the real consequences of adopting this belief? What difference would it make to the topic in question? The end product is a narrative that challenges its desired audience by offering a new, plausible account of what is happening.

The actual data used in this paper were collected from three separate case studies of mobilization in the Great Lakes Region during the late 1980s. The three studies examined are: (1) recycling of wastes, (2) Remedial Action Planning Programs for Great Lakes water pollution, and (3) Community Right To Know reforms in toxic waste pollution. In the sections that follow, we will provide the findings of the three case studies, and use sociological research traditions to situate these findings within the larger literature on environmentalism. Using this contextualized interpretation of the movement, we will develop a set of concepts that allows us to refine generalized principles about the relationship between the environment, the economy, and the society. Obviously, we cannot refine all of these principles. Our task is to refine as many of them as we perceive a need, to understand the real-but-limited achievements of the modern phase of the U.S. environmental movement.

THREE CASE STUDIES OF ENVIRONMENTALISM

We start our review by drawing from our own research to demonstrate how environmental initiatives have been framed, produced and reproduced over time. Details of each of these cases can be found in the empirical papers referred to in each section.

RECYCLING AS A SOLID WASTE SOLUTION

In the past six years, environmentalists have entered into a new *de facto* or *de jure* coalition with state agencies and private sector interests, in promoting recycling as a solution to a growing "landfill crisis" of solid waste disposal. While recycling was originally introduced by environmental movement organizations in the 1960s and 1970s, it was not moved onto the national and regional political agendas until the mid-1980s. A variety of different political factors helped move the U.S. towards more recycling of post-consumer waste: (1) resistance of local groups to expanding landfills, due to past pollution problems, and present fears of toxic waste and health hazards; (2) manufacturers' gradual acceptance of some recycling as a cost-effective way of dealing with both these local groups, and with complaints about many of their production problems arising from concerns of local branches of regional or national environmental movement organizations; (3) growing public concerns over toxic wastes, which involve "contaminated" public perspectives about manufacturing plants, on the one hand, and landfills and incinerators as ways of disposing of wastes, on the other; and (4) growing public uneasiness with shrinking environmental regulation under the economic expansion pressures of the Reagan-Bush era .

In a series of analyses (Schnaiberg 1990a,b; 1992a,b), the social-distributive and ecological realities of contemporary recycling policies have been outlined. Modern recycling's hidden face of **remanufacturing** has created substantial pollution problems, for example. In addition, the centralization of remanufacturing has increasingly rationalized and routinized forms of post-consumer waste collection, the processing of these wastes and the shipping of both wastes and remanufactured goods. Increasingly,

these processes have become more capital-intensive, thereby dislocating many small business intermediaries, particularly those previously engaged in scrap and recycling activities. This remanufacturing process has also simultaneously displaced two forms of labor activity: (1) prior re-uses of consumer wastes, with low-skilled labor, and (2) production of goods from virgin materials, using a range of labor, from low-skilled to high-skilled. Moreover, this new rationalized system has increasingly commodified wastes and mandated more state activity and *de facto* subsidies in collecting such dispersed wastes. Collection is done primarily through municipal curbside pickup. This has, we believe, led to socially-regressive financial outcomes for lower-income urban residents. Local property and sales taxes, which are the primary means of supporting local curbside pickups, tend to be regressive in nature.

The net outcome of this program is a growing "glut" of collected but not remanufactured wastes. In effect, payment is transferred from local citizens to large-scale multinational recycling firms (primarily those processing aluminum, glass and paper), and prices paid to cities for these waste goods are reduced below anticipated levels. The latter occurs because recyclers, whose motivations are economic rather than ecological, are unwilling to invest in new remanufacturing facilities to keep pace with growth in curbside collections. Until they are ensured of new profitable markets for their remanufactured products, they refuse to risk new venture capital for remanufacturing facilities. In a paradoxical fashion, remanufactures have encouraged environmentalists to pressure city, state and federal agencies to "buy recycled," thereby potentially making local citizens pay for 'wastes' in four different ways: (1) as purchased products, (2) as taxes for curbside pickup, (3) as taxes to purchase more-costly recycled products for governments, and (4) as time (e.g., lost leisure time) of sorting wastes, and economic costs (e.g., heating of wash water) of washing recyclable containers.

Central to this limited form of "solutions" to waste disposal is: (1) a substantial increase in the resistance of the "recycling coalition" to considering more far-reaching

reduction of waste generation, (2) a substantial disinclination to seek more re-use of wastes, through using labor-intensive methods, or (3) a lack of motivation to create more regulation to control prices and profits generated by local recycling. Environmentalists have formed a coalition that has simultaneously promoted **and** limited broader recycling and broader reforms of manufacturing, in effect. Even more pernicious, however, is the fact that environmentalists have (1) coalesced to accept prices and profits as the dominant form of calculus of "program efficacy," allowing market forces to dominate political and social forces, and (2) agreed to look only at the wastes themselves, rather than at the social distributional effects of these waste-treatment policies (cf. Schnaiberg, 1991). Thus, exchange values and the institutions promoting these values have gained power in recycling, at the expense of organized labor (producing from virgin materials) and the poor (who have often subsisted on gathering discarded waste materials).

REMEDIAL ACTION PLANS AS POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

The structures established by governments to channel public participation in local natural resource conflicts often serve to prevent, rather than promote, a redistribution of local political power. The impacts of state-sponsored Remedial Action Plans (RAPs) for reducing the pollution of the Great Lakes, in the U.S. and Canada, have demonstrated the continued primacy of treadmill expansion. Despite the fact that these bi-national agreements have mandated the participation of primarily-working class communities as new players in Great Lakes' decision-making processes, the traditional participation of elites from major industrial organizations as the major "public" players continues (Gould, 1991a,b).

Since the first Earth Day in 1970, the levels of most chemical contaminants in the Great Lakes have been mounting continually. The public health and environmental impacts resulting from the use of the Great Lakes both as a source of drinking water and an industrial sewer demonstrate the inability of environmentalists to successfully pressure

the state to protect its constituents from environmental hazards. State responses to Great Lakes contamination have primarily protected the interests of treadmill elites, rather than those of workers and the poor.

One such state response has been the development of the Remedial Action Plan [RAP] process. The International Joint Commission, a bi-national institution developed to negotiate boundary water disputes between the U.S. and Canada, identified forty-two "Areas of Concern" [AOCs] around the Great Lakes, for which it has recommended remedial actions. AOC designation requires that the governments of the U.S. and Canada take remedial action at AOCs within their respective jurisdictions, as specified in bi-national Great Lakes Water Quality Agreements [GLWQAs].

Although the GLWQAs of 1972 and 1978 emerged, in part, as responses to increasing social movement activism on environmental issues, they have proven to be largely inadequate. The initial GLWQA included a mandate for public participation in local natural resource decision-making processes. Since the majority of AOCs are located in working-class communities, the GLWQA of 1972 ostensibly institutionalized a role for working-class participants within the state decision-making/action-taking system. The GLWQA of 1978 called for even-greater levels of public input into the development and implementation of Remedial Action Plans (Gould, 1991a, 1992b).

The RAP process was promoted by governments as a mechanism through which non-elite participation in natural resource decision-making might be realized. However, recent analyses (Gould 1991a; 1992a,b) have revealed that the state-sponsored RAP program has served primarily as a device to control and contain the responses of working-class and poor communities to local environmental problems. Instead of initiating a redistribution of political power, the RAP process has enabled the state's environmental management bureaucracies to control the "sociological problem" of public opinion by restricting the working-class and the poor to voicing their concerns and promoting their interests within a tightly-controlled forum.

RAPs have failed to provide either meaningful working-class participation in local environmental decision-making, or a progressive redistribution of power in working-class and poor communities in relation to the interests of private capital and the state. Where federal governments have had primary jurisdiction over local remediation, RAPs and their "public participation" structures have been subordinated. In communities where economic dependency and subsequent industrial control capacity is greatest (Gould, 1991b), the RAP process has been stalled and subverted. In communities where the RAP processes were fully implemented, the power of working-class and poor citizens, in relation to that of private capital and state agencies, remained virtually unaltered. In no instance were the interests of treadmill elites subordinated to local demands for environmental justice. The development of "new and improved" public participatory structures clearly does not represent a significant step toward the empowerment of working-class and poor communities (Gould, 1992b).

Nevertheless, environmentalists have applauded the emergence of the RAP process, and promoted and participated in its implementation. By doing so, environmentalists are complicit in the further structural disempowerment of the working-class and poor in local natural resource conflicts. Environmental social movement organizations have again chosen to make environmental gains through cooperation with treadmill elites, rather than facing the difficult political questions manifest in achieving a broader agenda of social and environmental justice (Gould & Weinberg, 1991).

Of course, organized and non-organized dependent labor has similarly found a temporary advantage in aligning with treadmill elites to thwart environmentalist efforts to achieve environmental remediation -- at the real or perceived expense of workers. It therefore behooves the environmentalists, the working-class and the poor to eschew these fleeting and shifting momentary alliances with treadmill elites, in favor of establishing more reliable and durable coalitions. This will require an extensive reevaluation and re-prioritization of goals to build on "common ground," with each set of interests making

concessions. The only positive result of the development of the RAP process, aside from relatively minor environmental remediation, is its potential for bringing working-class and poor communities into contact with environmental social movement organizations. The challenge for environmentalists is to use these opportunities as a catalyst for sustainable coalition formation (Staggenborg, 1991), rather than a temporary marriage of convenience, or the more common collision of competing and discordant interests (Zald & McCarthy, 1980).

COMMUNITY-RIGHT-TO-KNOW: THE FAILURE OF COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT.

When the Federal Emergency Planning Community-Right-To-Know Act (CRTK) was passed in 1986, as title III of the Superfund Reauthorization Act, it was hailed by environmentalists as a "revolutionary" law that would drastically alter the way that natural resources were regulated. CRTK mandated that certain companies which used, produced, stored, or emitted toxic chemicals above certain thresholds calculate emissions and report them to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on an annual basis. It also mandated that citizens be given access to that information. As such, environmental movement activists predicted the bill would empower communities, giving them the opportunity to become participants in the debate over the use of toxic chemicals.

As expected, CRTK did reshape the toxic chemical regulatory arena, but it did not empower communities. By Congressional mandate, the EPA was forced to implement the law with significant restrictions. The EPA had to structure the law in a way that would not burden private industry, nor require significant increases in federal agency budgets.

By the time CRTK was actually implemented, it suffered from a number of restrictions. First, only approximately 340 of the 60,000 chemicals used by American industry were covered by the law. Second, only limited industries were covered. Military installations, universities, small companies and some government contractors were exempt. Third, certain circumstances were exempt. For example, off-site

incinerated chemicals were exempted from reporting requirements. Finally, the information was self-reported and based on crude estimates. The following statistic summarizes the nature of the limitations: in 1987 companies reported emitting 20 billion pounds of toxic chemicals into the atmosphere (USPIRG Working Notes on CRTK, June 1989). The Government Office of Technology Assessment estimates the true figure to be closer to 400 billion pounds (USPIRG Working Notes on CRTK, May 1990). At a more micro-structural level, one major emitter was able to hide 89% of its emissions at one of its plants in 1987, while still complying with the law (USPIRG Working Notes on CRTK, February 1990).

The limitations were compounded by the difficulty that the public had accessing the data. To access CRTK data people needed large quantities of time, financial resources, technical expertise, political connections, and computer experience. People needed time to locate the EPA officials who had control over the CRTK information, time to make phone calls, time to wait for return phone calls, and often time to locate facilities in their communities that actually reported CRTK emission figures. They needed financial resources to pay for multiple long distance phone calls, financial resources to pay for various administrative costs like photocopying charges, and financial resources to obtain the needed supplemental information that would make CRTK useful. People also needed technical expertise to track down toxilogical information, technical expertise to decipher the scope of their information, and technical expertise to apply the data to their companies. They needed political connections to gain access to the law and political connections to force the companies to meet with them. Finally, people needed access to a computer base to obtain updated information. All of this made it difficult for communities to use the law (Weinberg, 1991, 1993; Hadden, 1989; Murphy, 1992; Johnson, 1991).

Over the last few years, the CRTK data has most often been used by private industry and the EPA not community groups or environmental organizations. The EPA has been

able to use the law to skirt public criticism by doing a little and claiming a lot. Using CRTK data, the EPA has enacted low cost alternatives to conventional regulatory programs. These complementary "volunteer" programs use CRTK data to identify chemicals and industries where change was "possible and acceptable." Companies agree to reduce emissions of certain chemicals by a certain percentage by a certain date. The EPA then helps companies to meet these goals. The partnerships gave the EPA a low cost program which yielded "good political and media results" (Weinberg, 1993). Most important, the EPA was able to do very little (all data, and most research, were reported by companies), while claiming much had been done (Weinberg, 1993).

Private industry has used the data as a resource to mount aggressive public relations campaigns and to stifle local mobilization attempts. Companies have used their control over the data to publicize that they are reducing emissions (although they rarely comment on non-CRTK chemicals). These companies have argued that they "have turned a corner" but need time (for community agitators to leave them alone) and deregulation (for the federal agencies to leave them alone). Upon closer inspection, it becomes apparent that these reduced emissions most often result from new calculation formulas or shifts to chemicals for which CRTK did not require any reporting (Weinberg, 1993).

Environmental groups and community organizations have not had the control of the data needed to combat these public relations campaigns or to access these voluntary programs. For example, community organizations in one study reported that during meetings, companies claimed that the community's information was outdated. They would then produce "updated" data that was vastly different from the community's. The community groups, left with no way of combating these arguments on the spot, had to concur with the companies. In one pilot project run by three powerful environmental organizations, only three of twenty-one community groups were able to use CRTK. The rest either could not access the data or had the data used against them (Weinberg, 1992).

CRTK has thus empowered private industry and the EPA more than it has community groups. When conflicts have arisen, private industry and the EPA have been able to use their superior command of the data to: (1) rebuff community criticisms, (2) set favorable agendas in important political arenas, and (3) reproduce favorable social constructions about local responsibility for toxic chemical pollution, and the optimal method of dealing with it (Weinberg, 1991, 1993).

RESEARCH TRADITIONS: AN OVERVIEW OF MODERN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES

Our review of how these "good ideas" came to be" starts with an overview of the modern phase of the environmental movement. The modern U.S. environmental movement is best assessed from the criteria of its maintenance of an **environmental equilibrium**, dictated primarily by natural cycles and the laws of thermodynamics (Schnaiberg, 1980: ch.I; Catton, 1980). This would fit within what has been called the *ecological synthesis* of the enduring dialectical conflict between economic expansion and environmental protection (Schnaiberg, 1975; 1980: ch. I). This conflict is dialectical because most actors in industrial societies have **two** sets of conflicting goals: they seek exchange values (material gains) from ecosystem extraction, while *at the same time* desiring some protection of natural systems for their basic use-values of health and recreation.

This results in two two significant discrepancies: the first, between positive policy words and dismal economic deeds; the second, between environmental transactions and distributive societal relationships.

DISMAL ECONOMIC DEEDS VS. POSITIVE POLICY WORDS

From the above perspective, the environmental movement has largely been a failure (Gore, 1992). Optimistic words are most often matched with dismal policy deeds. While the urgency of the call for recycling programs or community empowerment may make us

optimistic about the **words** (statements and agreements), the policy **deeds** that occasioned these initiatives are by definition very dismal.

Arguably, some positive environmental protection steps have been taken. When contextualized with the prior dominance in industrial societies of a model of an *economic synthesis*, modern environmental movements can be seen as **partial successes**. **Some** positive environmental protection steps have been taken: e.g., improvements in some forms of air and water quality, reduction of health and ecological disruption through some impoundments of toxic wastes, and restoration of some landscapes and habitats through state and movement actions. These have been referred to as *managed scarcity* policies (Schnaiberg, 1980: ch. IX; 1983a, 1985). We label such policy shifts as "partial" not only because they fail to achieve the ecological synthesis of ecological equilibrium, but because almost every legislative mandate for environmental protection has fallen very short of its own stated objectives (Landy *et al.*, 1990; Yeager, 1991; Lowi, 1979, 1986; Buttel, 1986; Burton, 1986).

Paradoxically, as "environmental values" have diffused as a cultural tenet of modern industrial societies, they have generally done so without public consciousness of the dialectical relationships between capital accumulation, economic development, and environmental equilibria (cf. Inglehart, 1977, 1990; Rohrschneider, 1991). This irony is heightened by the fact that many of these "values" have emerged from popular culture. They are based upon media reporting, industrial advertising, and environmental organization proclamations which have generally diluted the messages of a structural, dialectical conflict between development and environmental protection (Hecht & Cockburn, 1992; Bunker, 1985; Betz, 1992, Leavitt, 1992; Schnaiberg, 1975, 1980: ch. I). From such naive and/or political conceptualizations arise notions such as "sustainable growth," which appears to be an ecological oxymoron (Redclift, 1984, 1987; Davis, 1991; Schnaiberg, 1983a).

What is absent from most popular and much policy-making rhetoric about environmental protection is a dismissal of the central features of the modern industrial *treadmill of production*. The core feature of this model (Schnaiberg, 1980; Schnaiberg & Gould, 1994) of relevance here is that the social actors and organizations most successful in achieving profits through **exchange-values** -- derived from environmental extraction and usually accompanied by some form of environmental degradation or **loss of ecosystem use-values** -- are precisely those groups who rise into political empowerment, by accumulating economic power. From these positions of power, they have a kind of Malthusian *tendency* to expand their productive activities through political and economic influence, thereby increasing their *tendency* to further degrade environmental systems. While modern utopian theorists (like Godwin, and later, some followers of Karl Marx) argued that social actors were rational and would therefore not destroy the environmental roots of their wealth and power, comparative-historical evidence strongly suggests otherwise (Petersen, 1975). The tragedy of the industrial commons (Hardin, 1968; cf. Catton, 1980) will continue so long as the benefits [exchange-values] of such environmental extraction can be grasped by these industrial leaders, and the costs [lost use-values] externalized to other social groups (cf. Schumacher, 1973; Stretton, 1976; Ophuls, 1977; Brown & Mikkelsen, 1990; Bullard, 1990).

For our purposes then, we can conclude that it is neither surprising or unusual that the urgency of the call for recycling, RAPs, and Community-Right-To-Know did not match the policy **deeds**. Like all environmental initiatives, they were shaped by exchange value criteria and deeds.

ENVIRONMENTAL TRANSACTIONS VERSUS
DISTRIBUTIVE SOCIETAL RELATIONSHIPS

As we view the past 25 years of U.S. environmentalism, two significant features emerge: (1) the volatility of membership in individual movement organizations --

especially movement coalitions in any specific environmental-policy arena, and (2) the continuing under-representation of working and underclass groups, and minorities in general, in environmental movement organizations and in their volatile coalitions. One possible exception is the formation of local groups organized for a short time around local health concerns about hazardous wastes. Thus, for example, environmentalists have been talking about a coalition with "labor groups" on and off for these past 25 years, but we know of no continuity of any such coalition. As one environmental organizer involved in a joint project with a local union put it: "It's kind of dicey (keeping the project afloat) ... I wonder if it will last [Gould, field notes, July 1992]."

We have puzzled over this lack of enduring coalitions for many years now. Our tentative conclusion is that the agenda, rhetoric, and assumptions of most mainstream environmental movement organizations does not represent the concerns of the less empowered groups in modern societies. As Krauss (1992 and later in this volume) poignantly and painfully points out, one of the advantages that minority group members and organizations can bring to environmental movement organizations is the well-grounded expectation that government agencies do not normally address such citizens' concerns in their regular policy-making (Brown & Mikkelson, 1990). This mirror for the modern environmental movement suggests that the bulk of movement membership consists of only those middle, upper-middle, and upper-class actors who expect the government agencies to take their views seriously in public policy-making. This may be due, in part, to their economic experiences in other arenas, insofar as the state often does act in support of their interests (Mitchell 1980). Increasingly though, even these citizens have come to realize that there is "no safe place" to evade environmental hazards (Brown & Mikkelson, 1991).

An equally important paradox of the mainstream environmental movement is that it deals primarily with ecological changes. Generally, most mainstream environmental movement organizations pay less attention to the *de facto* economic distributional

implications necessary to produce "environmental protection" (Schnaiberg *et al.*, 1986; Walljasper, 1992; Webster, 1992).¹ The origin of this paradox can be traced to historical choices made by the movement. Early in the modern phase, the movement chose to manage the treadmill by becoming a "player" in legitimate political arenas, and by playing to a largely middle to upper-middle class white suburban constituency. In doing so, they have adopted an "environmental protection as usual" model, which is similar to Stretton's (1976) socially-regressive scenarios in which either "the rich rob the poor" or it is "business as usual."

This places the movement at odds with the environmental **justice** dimensions of "sustainable development" programs (e.g., Sachs, 1989; Shiva, 1989; Chambers, 1986). The latter entail some **positive redistribution** of economic resources in order to sustain social and political support (Leavitt, 1992; Bryant & Mohai, 1992), as well as to sustain ecological support for this type of economic development (Hecht & Cockburn, 1992; Bidwai, 1992; Goldman, 1992). Issues of positive redistribution created a great schism at Stockholm in 1972 (Rosenbaum, 1973: 260-261) between industrial-state environmentalists and third-world developmentalists. In the intervening years, more U.S. environmental movement organizations took somewhat greater account of domestic and international distributive conflicts, especially during the "energy crisis" of the 1970s. One example was the promotion of gas rationing, rather than oil pricing, as a conservation strategy (Schnaiberg, 1985). But most of these responses were words or near-ritual public deeds, not strategic changes. These distributive tensions were somewhat more directly negotiated by governmental representatives preparing for the Rio conference (Newhouse, 1992; Goldman, 1992). And a variety of non-governmental organizations appeared in Rio to encourage such linkages. One irony of these internationally redistributive *Riowords*, however, is that few of the governments **or** environmental organizations from industrial states had engaged in any major positively-redistributive deeds through their own national policies, in the years between 1972 and 1992. Even in

the energy arena, for example, the innovation of electricity "lifeline" rates and energy subsidies of the 1970s were innovations of social equity movements. This program actually involved only the nominal participation of environmental movement organizations (Schnaiberg, 1975, 1983a, 1983c, 1985, 1986a).

The reality of redistributive policy proposals (e.g., Lowi, 1964, 1972, 1979), then, is that those groups with greater economic resources strongly resist giving up their wealth and income to protect ecosystem scarcity. At the same time, as educated individuals, they often donate membership funds to environmental organizations, as well as make corporate donations for public interest environmental campaigns and limited environmental education programs. We should note that most of these are tax-deductible contributions. Furthermore, these elites have the political, social, and economic power to effectively implement resistance to redistribution in domestic policies. First, they do so by opposing such environmentalist proposals. Second, if the proposals are nonetheless enacted, they may prevent their implementation (Lowi, 1979, 1986; Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1981; Lake, 1982). Third, if the programs are nonetheless implemented, they act to redistribute their corporate (and private income) costs to less-powerful groups (Lowi, 1979; Landy *et al.*, 1990).

Again, this discrepancy between environmental transactions and distributive societal relationships explains much about how recycling, RAPs and Community-Right-To-Know efforts became reshaped. It demonstrates how those groups with greater economic resources resisted giving up their wealth and income, by reshaping social problems and environmental initiatives. In each of these cases, these groups opposed the initiatives, reshaped them during the implementation process, and finally, used them to redistribute their corporate (and private income) costs to less-powerful groups.

*RHETORIC VERSUS REALITY OF ENVIRONMENTALISM'S
REDISTRIBUTIVE DEEDS*

Environmental movement organizations have dealt with the scenario outlined in the last two sections in a number of ways. In particular, we note four patterns of action. In terms of pushing for **environmental protection**: (1) they can retreat from all attempts at policy influence, and instead engage only in voluntary alternative behaviors, as one mechanism of cultural persuasion about environmental protection (although usually demonstrating their eco-behavior to their already converted back-to-the-land cohorts); (2) they can try to persuade elite groups that planning for environmental protection will protect their long-term interests by protecting their investments. With regard to the dilemmas of **negative redistribution**: (1) they can retreat from this issue, by ignoring such concerns and keeping their distance from less-powerful social groups and organizations (the 1970-1990 tack); or (2) they can try to build a stronger coalition to oppose dominant elites by coupling environmental goals with economically and politically-redistributive means. This would integrate environmental and distributive issues (e.g., Bullard, 1990; Bryant & Mohai, 1992) in a single major strategy, as is evinced by the efforts of the U.S. Green Party to mobilize inner-city support through their "Detroit Summer" program [Leavitt, 1992]).

One way of conceptualizing these concrete alternative political strategies is through the pioneering work of Robert K. Merton (1957) on social responses to anomie. Merton specified five different paths for individuals (and organizations, including social movement organizations, we think) to adapt to this gulf between means (deeds) and ends (words). His modes of response are specified in Chart 2 below, along with their application to environmental movement organizations and their constituencies.

CHART 2 ABOUT HERE

While most environmental movement organizations share a rhetoric of "saving the earth," they lay claim to saving "it" for some vaguely utilitarian constituency -- "the

greatest good for the greatest number," in effect. When they are attacked by powerful economic interest groups, who cite environmentalists' threats to employment, wages, and/or taxes, most environmental movement groups tend to respond that they are merely social "shop stewards", acting in the name of broader **environmentally-impacted** social constituencies (e.g., Devall, 1980; Evernden, 1985). They also frequently deny that any negative economic impacts are associated with environmental protection measures, as evinced by their frequent response that "environmental protection creates jobs." Interestingly, this also appears to be the position of the new Clinton-Gore administration.

Often overlooked in these social claims and counterclaims is that there are two kinds of *de facto* environmentally-impacted constituencies of these same environmental protection movements (eg., Crowfoot *et al.*, 1991). First, there are those social groups who are victims of environmental **degradation**, who suffer from diminished use-values of their ecosystems. Second, there are those social groups who are distributive victims of environmental **protection** enforcement, who may suffer from diminished exchange-value [market] returns from their labor inputs and/or their local investments (e.g., jobs/wages, and home values, respectively). As Landy *et al.* (1990: 294) have succinctly put the policy question for the Environmental Protection Agency:

What levels of public or private compensation should various parties receive due either to the environmental insults they have suffered or to the adverse economic consequences of environmental protection efforts they have endured?

One way of viewing this duality of *ecological* and *social distributional* dimensions of environmental movements is to classify the movement types in chart 2 on two distinctive dimensions.

CHART 3 ABOUT HERE

Chart 3 attempts to further our narrative by offering a preliminary classification, drawing on the early work of Stretton (1976) on environmental policy scenarios. We draw on Stretton's three distributive policy models of "the rich rob the poor," "business as usual," and "new possibilities" for social stratification dimensions of environmental protection. In particular, in chart 4 we use: (1) the position of each movement type based on the type of synthesis of the *societal-environmental dialectic* with which the movement identifies, and (2) the position of each movement on issues of *progressive* social distributional outcomes of its proposed ecological policies.

CHART 4 ABOUT HERE

All of this is well documented and demonstrated in the recent controversies over the protection of the Northern spotted owl by limiting Pacific Northwestern lumbering, which reflect these socioeconomic realities. This conflict exacerbated local employment problems, which are largely caused by Japanese demand for untreated lumber from the region. Note that we do not argue that these environmental protection efforts are socially reprehensible (Burton, 1986). We simply point out the *social* implications of such *ecological protection*, in a context where there is no environmental justice program proposed by the environmental movements involved (cf. Burton, 1986). Such a program might recommend reallocating the federal revenues currently dedicated to subsidizing extraction by large lumber corporations to re-train, re-locate, or subsidize potentially dislocated loggers, or to create local employment alternatives to logging.

Over the last three sections, we have sought to provide an overview of the environmental programs of modern environmental movement. We have done so by pointing to two discrepancies that shape these policies. There is a discrepancy between dismal economic deeds vs. positive policy words, and a discrepancy between overt

environmental transactions and covert distributive societal realities. Finally, we have shown how these discrepancies are masked by the rhetoric and realities of environmental protection redistributive deeds. From this perspective, our three reported case studies are both explainable and predictable. At first surprising and disheartening, they become good examples of "business as usual."

REFINING PRINCIPLES ON THE ENVIRONMENT, THE ECONOMY, AND THE SOCIETY: SUSTAINABLE RESISTANCE AND SUSTAINABLE LEGITIMACY

To translate the overview presented, one might consider the "progress" of the environmental movement "industry" in the past 25 years as residing *more* in **processual** changes than in **substantive** changes. By processual, we refer to the changes in decision-making procedures that were called for in legislation such as the National Environmental Policy Act [NEPA] of 1969 (Schnaiberg, 1980: ch. VI). These changes have entailed **adding** some form of environmental **evaluation** to the procedures for planning public investments, through the introduction of an environmental impact statement, and later to a social impact statement. It is important to note that environmental evaluations **never replaced** economic or exchange-value criteria for public -- and, especially, private -- allocations of capital outlays. In fact, within such evaluative procedures, economic benefits are often found to out-weigh environmental costs. Thus, even in its arena of greatest strength -- environmental evaluation procedures -- the success of environmental movement organizations mainly resides in introducing environmental criteria into the **political conflict agenda**.

Placement on the agenda, however, only entitled these groups to become "players," to struggle for the attentiveness of political, economic, and social elites. In this regard, the frequent confusion of casual environmental observers that NEPA is the National Environmental **Policy** Act (and not the National Environmental **Protection** Act) is instructive. The reality is that NEPA's reforms were procedural, and that there are many questions as to whether any substantive changes were brought about by NEPA.

By "substantive," we mean decisions to reallocate social resources in ways that routinely and predictably enhance environmental protection over and against pre-existing and contemporary economic goals such as profits, wages, and employment. In this regard, we should look to the other successes of environmental movements, in the broad array of substantive environmental legislation created in the past twenty-five years. This legislation ranges from clean air and water acts, through toxic substances control, resource recovery and conservation, and endangered species legislation, among others. Indeed, enforcement of this substantive legislation is what provides any leverage from NEPA. The latter can only raise consciousness about anticipated violations of these legislative acts, which may then lead to new political mobilization to resist anti-environmental investments. Agencies of the state are resistant to enforcing the substantive provisions of environmental laws, and often subvert this enforcement through negotiations with private interests (Lowi, 1979). Enforcement agents are also frequently coopted in their interpersonal negotiations with specific corporate violators (Hawkins, 1984). Environmental movement organizations may thus be stymied, or forced to engage in long-term, costly litigation under any or all of these conditions.

Interestingly, one of the arguments of the Bush administration against signing the Rio agreements for *global* warming and *global* biodiversity protection was that *domestic* environmental movements could take the government into U.S. courts (Burke, 1992; Goodman, 1992). In contrast to European Community members, whose environmental movements presumably would politically demonstrate, U.S. environmental movement organizations would be more likely to litigate to enforce government compliance with these somewhat vague international agreements. This suggests that litigation may be costly for government agencies as well as environmental movement organizations. But it does not imply that litigation is a sufficient threat to ensure private-sector commitment to legislation that provides environmental protection directives. In many instances, violation may still be cheaper than compliance.

One interpretation of this environmental protection history is that environmental movements have been more successful in getting **listed on** the broad political agenda (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962, 1963, 1973) than in getting their policies **institutionalized within** this agenda. The good news for environmental reformers is that there is some form of *cultural and/or political legitimacy* for a "consideration" of environmental protection policies, within the range of managed scarcity policies. However, we argue that this also represents some bad news, since the price of this legitimacy for most environmental movement organizations is their failure to engage in the politics of "environmental justice".

Using Lowi's (1964, 1972) classification, environmental movements are *de facto* "distributive" movements, influencing the reallocation of ecosystem "access" among and between market actors and citizen users. By not raising new **social** standards for such access (including fiscal as well as physical access to ecosystems), environmentalists have often become *de jure* "negatively redistributive" movements, aligning themselves with large-scale capital interests and state bureaucratic actors, **against** the interests of organized and unorganized labor, and the poor and lower-income working classes (Schnaiberg, 1983a). This then disempowers environmental movements in two planes. First, capital and state interest groups can point to the socially-regressive outcomes of environmental protection. These have been especially noticeable in SLAPP suits, those funded by regulated industries aimed at citizen voluntary movements [Canan, 1992], and in CRCLA's Superfund cost-sharing regulations, which permit these industries to sue small businesses and municipalities who had even small shares of toxic waste generation. Through raising perceptions of such costs, they can thereby mobilize more workers and social equity movements in opposition to environmental reforms. This is a **direct cost** of this type of legitimation. Second, environmental movement organizations forfeit some active support by these classes of workers and the poor for environmental reform with social justice (positive redistribution, or at least the absence of negative redistribution).

This is an **indirect cost** of this historical attainment of legitimacy. Chart 5 outlines the typical patterns of actual environmental coalitions around so-called "environmental justice" issues.

CHART 5 ABOUT HERE

Almost none of these conditions provide a **sustained, equalized** coalescence between environmental movement organizations and those of labor, lower-income working classes, or the poor. These latter groups represent a huge, though politically under-represented, portion of the American population. However, there has been temporarily-successful coalition formation between the environmental movement and organized labor (Schnaiberg & Gould, 1994). Examples such as the support of organized coal miners in the anti-nuclear movement have been primarily issue-specific marriages of convenience, with little or no long-term basis for joint mobilization. Where there have been successful community endeavors by minority groups (Bullard, 1990) or female (Krauss, 1992 and in this volume) or working-class constituencies (Brown & Mikkelsen, 1990), these successful social equity mobilization efforts appear to have taken place outside the orbits of environmental movement organizations (cf. Milbrath, 1984, 1993).

Our argument can be restated as follows: environmental movements have achieved some significant gains in the past twenty-five years in their political legitimacy within the U.S. and (especially following the Earth Summit) more broadly within the industrial world. As with domestic redistributive inequalities, though, these gains have been both very limited and somewhat costly politically. This becomes clear in each of our own works. In these empirical examples, environmental movements should be praised for getting initiatives to a state where they were deemed politically legitimated. It was no easy task to get them passed. Contrarily, each policy was costly, and had redistributive inequalities. In the end, the movement paid a large social price to get a little ecological

protection. From this we argue that the U.S. environmental movement has made some progress towards a limited form of *sustainable resistance* to the treadmill of production, but they have made few inroads towards a *sustainable legitimacy*.

Our concept of "sustainability" is the social equivalent of the new ecological catchword in international environmentalism, *sustainable* development. For us, sustainability is at least as much a political-economic dimension as an ecological one. That is, what can be sustained is only what political and social forces in a particular historical alignment define as acceptable. Socio-political processes of mobilizing citizen resistance serve as a quite variable buttress against the inherent tendencies of industrial and industrializing society -- both capitalist and socialist -- to accelerate the treadmill of production, and to produce severe environmental degradation. In historical periods when socioeconomic, political, and/or cultural factors produce more concern about social and/or environmental issues, then untrammelled expansion is more likely to be somewhat restrained (Schnaiberg, 1986b).

Conversely, as we have seen in the U.S. in the 1980's, apparently "sustainable" environmental gains of earlier decades can be largely reversed when socio-political and/or cultural circumstances change (Schnaiberg, 1986a; Lash *et al.*, 1984; Claybrook, 1984). This was made even more apparent in the 1990s, where an expressly "environmental" president could completely ignore environmental issues when economic "sustainability" was threatened (Newhouse, 1992). For example, the 1992 State of the Union Address made no mention whatsoever of environmental problems, issues or policies. By using the terms *sustainable resistance* and *sustainable legitimacy*, we seek to provide a vocabulary needed to talk about movement success or failure. It is our contention that these phrases provide the fluidity and flexibility across numerous dimensions we seek to integrate in such an evaluation.

In chart 6, we lay out the essential differences between sustainable resistance and sustainable legitimacy. The latter includes a strong **social** agenda, as well as an

environmental one. This agenda serves to reflect the social needs of a more diverse set of less-powerful constituencies, who in turn become political resources for the "legitimate" environmental movement organizations (e.g., Bailey, 1991).

CHART 6 ABOUT HERE

These less-powerful groups cannot offer movement organizations much financial support. In most cases, they even lack the capacity to spend large amounts of time on the movements' administrative and litigative protests and negotiations. But they have the potential to be mobilized for elections, and for some crucial public protests (e.g. Webster, 1992; Suro, 1993). This is the *quid pro quo* for the representation of their interests by the more middle-class movement participants. They can offer environmentalists political support for ecological protection, in return for the political support offered by more middle-class environmental social movement organizations in social-distributional conflicts (e.g., Bluestone & Harrison, 1982; Blumberg, 1980) with state agencies (e.g., welfare), and private sector elites (e.g., employment). Labor unions may thus offer their support for community pollution abatement, in return for environmentalists' support for enhanced workplace safety, or tariffs on foreign imports. Poverty groups may help picket city hall in protest over toxic waste dumps, in return for environmentalists' support of their fears about incinerator operations in poor neighborhoods (e.g., Walljasper, 1992; Webster, 1992).

Using the concept of sustainable resistance, we have refined our general principles about the relationship between the economy, the society, and the environment insofar as they need to be refined, to understand the achievements of the movement. From this, our optimistic view is that over the past 25 years, the environmental movement has 'institutionalized' or "sustained" the place of environmental "accounting" on the political agenda (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962, 1963, 1973). Conversely, our more pessimistic view

is that while environmentalists have become players in economic policy battles (Schnaiberg, 1980: ch. V), they have in fact lost most of these struggles to restrict in an enduring way the economic expansion tendencies of the treadmill of production. Put bluntly, environmentalists have achieved some weak managed scarcity syntheses of the societal-environmental dialectic by playing policy battles. However, the dominance of capital accumulation and economic expansion within our social, political, and cultural institutions is left largely intact. Hence, while environmental accounting and legislation mounts, so does environmental disorganization -- and at an even faster pace.

One of the reasons for this dominance is the conspicuous failure of environmentalists to link their ecological agendas [use-values] with the socioeconomic market-subsistence needs [exchange-values] of workers, minorities and the poor. In effect, environmentalists have formed an uneasy alliance with some of the representatives of capital accumulation interests, in the private and state sectors, to achieve a limited form of "legitimacy." Because their working alliance represents the juxtaposition of dominant expansionary interests of the treadmill and movements seeking to limit this expansion, the ecological protection potential of these movements is restricted to weaker forms of planned scarcity. At the same time, a growing body of antagonists to this ecological protection is produced, by the marginalization of the less-powerful in this alliance.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO WITH THE REFINED PRINCIPLE? SUSTAINABLE RESISTANCE AND FUTURE TRAJECTORIES

In this section, we seek to use the concept of sustainable resistance to suggest future trajectories open to the movement. By doing so, we hope to demonstrate how sociological concepts could be used to help the movement manage the tensions and paradoxes of the treadmill in a more productive manner. Chart 7 summarizes the potential for sustainability represented by the movement history of the last 25 years [left

column], and contrasts [in the right column] the changes that will be necessary to undergird a truly legitimized and sustainable movement.

CHART 7 ABOUT HERE

The core difference between the historical past and the foreseeable future of environmental movements lies in the ratio of social to environmental targets of the environmentalists' agenda. But, as we will soon note, this shift will require a major effort, not just a superficial adjustment of the organizations' publicity and tactics. It will require a new strategy, and perhaps new leadership, as well as quite different modes of recruiting, socializing, and mobilizing old and/or new constituencies. In the process, it may actually be the case that environmental protection words as well as deeds will have to become more modest, as efforts shift to creating new movement relationships for an enduring 'environmental justice' coalition. Conversely, more of the empty "words" about environmental justice may become actualized in movement strategies (although not necessarily in their political gains). When not linked to the interests of the treadmill elites, environmental goals will be harder to achieve, as the forces mobilized against the attainment of these goals will be greater and more vociferous (cf. Bruntland, 1989; Court, 1990; Redclift, 1987; Glaeser, 1984; Shiva, 1989; Wad *et al.*, 1991; Schumacher, 1973).

The future trajectory we see starts with the premise that the broad diffusion and "concern" for environmental protection reported by social surveys and media coverage may be presenting a distorted or at least an inflated image. We point instead to the **valence**, weighting, or relative value commitments to "environmental protection," in contrast to respondents' other values of consumerism and careerism, such as comfort, wages, and investment returns (Schor, 1991; Needleman, 1991; Galbraith 1992). Because responses to social surveys have no real behavioral implications, respondents are free to espouse vague levels of "commitment to environmental values". However, where

there are ongoing community conflicts, or national debates about social and economic policies, the results are quite different. It should be noted that the spotted-owl was exempted from endangered species legislation, and that the conflict occurred in the Pacific Northwest, an "ecotopian" stronghold (Burton, 1986; Devall, 1980). It is in these "battles" that we believe the limitations of the environmentalist achievements are demarcated, and the dominant economic expansion values reaffirmed. There are some major exceptions to this trend of ignoring distributional issues, and we have taken special note of this in our respective areas of research. These exceptions could prove to be harbingers of future environmental movement organizations, which might achieve sustained legitimacy.

In chart 8, we lay out a simplistic model for thinking about environmental justice mobilization based on our reexamination of the movement's failures and successes over the last twenty-five years.

CHART 8 ABOUT HERE

First, we stress that economic elites, from whom environmentalists have recently achieved some form of 'legitimation', are typically dominated by exchange-value concerns. While they may have some ancillary commitments to preserving use-values, these are usually non-vocational, relating to their non-work roles (e.g., as philanthropists or "naturalists"). Hence, building environmentalist "legitimacy" upon relationships with economic elites, which constitutes more of the coalition-building efforts of environmentalists in the last 25 years, is a highly restricting and contradictory action. While there may be temporary alliances in support of one or another environmental protection policy, the enduring relationships between economic elites and environmental movements reflect contradictory values.

Interestingly, chart 8 gives no ready "solution" to coalition-building for many current environmental movement organizations. There is simply no other social grouping that is dominantly committed to use-values of environmentalism over exchange-values of their economic roles (with the possible exception of some small religious sects). Conversely, no other group is as dominantly committed to exchange-values as the economic elite. Chart 8 implies two sobering realities for environmental movement organizations: (1) there is no other coalition partner that will be as uniformly committed to the use-value primacy that environmental movement organizations typically possess, and (2) to achieve coalitions with any other partner, environmentalists must adapt to the various exchange-value priorities of their other coalition partners (Buttel, 1985, 1986; Schnaiberg, 1982, 1983c, 1986a; cf. Morrison 1980). This will necessitate the development of attractive economic alternatives to current treadmill development trajectories. Paradoxically, the history of the past 25 years, with a *de facto* alliance with many economic elites and major environmental organizations, indicates that such environmental movement groups have already accepted both such economic realities as the price of "getting on the political agenda" (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962, 1963, 1973). Thus, these historical compromises may present a template for our model of future sustained legitimacy. One alternative historical model that we should note is the evolution of the so-called "progressive" conservation movement, during Theodore Roosevelt's presidency. This may have been an ecologically progressive movement, but its emphasis on "sustained yield" evolved into a *de facto* coalition between natural scientists, the state, and large-scale land owners and mining concerns, frequently pitted against small farmers and other landowners (Hays, 1969). This early-twentieth century model of scientifically-sustained yield in fact paid little attention to social equity. Predictably, the socio-economic and political outcomes of this rationalization of production were quite regressive, in terms of subsistence agriculture and small-scale extractive industry. This precedent stands as a

warning as we encounter yet another struggle to "sustain" our production system (Redclift, 1984, 1987).

If environmentalists were to form new and enduring coalitions, or recurrent but less-enduring coalitions with labor, community, or social equity movement groups or organizations, they actually have a greater chance of "**dominating** the agenda," through political veto power over economic elites and their state supporters. This requires, in return, mobilizing environmentalists to support labor, community, or social equity goals as part of the "environmental" agenda of **environmental justice** (Gore, 1992). This model, while it superficially resembles some of Schumacher's (1973) "appropriate technology" abstract **goals**, represents a quite different political **process**, one that is absolutely saturated with enduring **conflicts** (O'Connor, 1973, 1988; Hecht & Cockburn, 1992; Schnaiberg & Gould, 1994). To some extent, it differs from the models of "sustainable development" of the Brundtland Commission and others (e.g., Court, 1990). Both of these morally-laudable paths to environmental justice ignore the historically-rooted opposition to these goals, based on the historical joint accumulation of capital and political power associated with economic elites' exchange-value orientations to the environment. In contrast, our model is one of **enduring vigilance, repeated mobilization, painful negotiations of priorities, and sustained conflict with dominant economic and political institutions and their representatives**. In the absence of any of these traits in the movement organizations, "back-sliding" will occur rather rapidly, since it is unlikely in the foreseeable future that use-values will ever **replace** exchange-values as the **dominant** political and economic culture. In short, the reports of a "silent revolution" (Inglehart, 1977, 1990) have been greatly exaggerated.

CONCLUSION: NEW SELECTION AND NEW SOCIALIZATION FOR 'ENVIRONMENTALISTS'

Sustained legitimacy is a challenge for the existing "environmental movement industry." The difficulty of moving in this direction is one we do not underestimate

(Hecht & Cockburn, 1992; Redclift 1987; Little, 1992). There are many reasons for the limitations of the current environmental movement organizations. In particular, there is evidence that many environmentalists have entered environmental movements after little previous political or social experience with dissent (Mitchell, 1980). Thus, the reluctance of environmentalists to engage in serious resistance to economic and political elites is understandable. Many of these environmentalists sought to avoid political conflicts, in short, and "environmentalism" was a way of becoming active without entering into major conflicts with elites. Furthermore, many of these participants have at least weak ties to dominant economic elites, and they share many exchange values with them. Conversely, they are more remote from a broader mass of the citizenry engaged in "dirty work" -- especially blue collar, semi-skilled, or marginal workers. The latter's concerns are often less about culture and environmental protection than about economic survival (Bullard, 1990; Bryant & Mohai, 1992).

Moving towards a model of sustained legitimacy, through seriously sustained resistance, will require many shifts within and between environmental constituencies. Old participants would be extruded from the movement organizations. New minority, female, and social equity participants would be incorporated (Krauss, 1992). These are not easy changes, but the alternative of remaining at the present levels of limited management of scarcity is a commitment to a very limited agenda (Shabecoff, 1992). It is one that will be increasingly resisted by even more segments of the population, as this type of scarcity becomes magnified by shifts in the world economic system -- which will impose even more limits on organized labor and the poor in the United States and elsewhere (Barlett & Steele, 1991; Phillips, 1989, 1993; Schor, 1991). Under this condition, resistance is likely to grow from economic elites as well, except for those industries whose products are themselves environmental protection technologies (Newhouse, 1992). In either case, conflicts around environmental protection will grow. But only in the latter case will it be *possible* to build enough of a political base to

challenge capital owners in their dominance within the policy arena. If such mobilization were to become successful, then governments would be forced to attend to environmental issues with deeds, and not just words. The emergence of a broad-based socio-environmental movement will require the state to act in order to maintain its own political legitimacy.

Sustainable resistance to the treadmill will hence necessitate greater governmental responsiveness, if only to achieve "sustainable legitimation" vis-a-vis its constituents (cf. Reich, 1991). However, this possibility must also be tempered by the fact that environmental protection will have to be negotiated in conjunction with social distribution. This may even entail temporary withdrawals of environmental protection, *i.e.*, reductions in managed scarcity policies. Ironically, we note that the U.S. has already experienced such reversals, but they are usually premised on protecting capital owners, not workers.

Beyond that, there are no promises. What we propose is a process, whose outcomes will be variable, but which *should* eventuate in an enhanced form of environmental protection **and** socio-environmental justice.

Chart 1: Conventional versus Pragmatic Approaches
to Environmental Sociology

<u>SOCIOLOGY</u>	<u>CONVENTIONAL</u> <u>ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY</u>	<u>PRAGMATIC</u> <u>ENVIRONMENTAL</u>
<i>Perspectives on the environmental movement</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Network of groups involved in environmental conflicts.•Issues are centered around conservation and preservation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•'Environment' is a contested word to talk about community-based, class & ethnic groups engaged in conflict.•Discourse centers on the environmental aspects of the contested issues.
<i>Perspectives on environmental sociology</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Seeks to identify & understand the constituency, effects, and ideologies of movement groups.•Seeks to verify these movement facts, using metaphors to draw linkages and discuss continuities between movement case studies and public opinion survey results.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Seeks to contextualize localized discourses, using broader principles of societal organization.•Seek to logically refine the broader principles about the relationship of environmental discourses to issues of justice, individual freedom, and the environment.

Chart 2: Environmental Responses to Anomie

<i>Mode</i>	<i>Cultural Goals</i> // <u>Environmental Protection</u>	<i>Institutionalized Means</i> // <u>Non-redistributive economic policies</u>	<i>Environmentalist behaviors</i> // <u>Environmental Movement 'programs'</u>
Conformity	+	+	Environmental protection words
Innovation	+	-	Envir. protection words/deeds & envir. justice words
Ritualism	-	+	"Bandwagon" lip service to envir. protection
Retreatism	-	-	Alternative lifestyles &/or 'radical' words
Rebellion	+/- ¹	+/- ²	Envir. justice & envir. protection words & deeds

¹This involves rejecting narrow environmental protection values and substituting "environmental justice" values.

² This includes activities that involve innovations in environmental protection, coupled with activities that include overt redistributive conflicts to achieve social equity at the same point. That is:

Environmental justice = Environmental protection+ Social equity

Chart 3: Competing Types of Environmental Movement Words/Deeds

"Structuralist" or

"radical": mobilize to defeat economic elites and the treadmill of production
- **key assumption:** "most citizens" benefit.
- *Collective action in opposition to the treadmill.*

"Retreatist" or

"deep ecologist": transform society by appropriate technology or sustained development
- **key assumption:** "everyone" benefits.
- *Individual and small group actions in opposition to the treadmill.*

"Reformist": modify production to substantially reduce environmental problems

- **key assumption:** "citizens" and investors have equal stakes in production & environmental protection.
- *Cooperative action with treadmill elites.*

"Meliorist": "buy green," lower the thermostat & other consumer actions

- **key assumption:** consumption leads production.
- *Individual actions within the treadmill will change production systems.*

"Cosmetologist": recycle "litter"

- **key assumption:** the government will take care of problems.
- *Individual action only as directed by treadmill elites.*

"Social equity": the problem is economic survival, not environmental protection

- **key assumption:** poorer people need to have their basic needs met.
- *Support of the treadmill only insofar as more jobs and income flow to the unempowered.*

"Anti-environmentalist": the problem is environmental alarmists, not the environment

- **key assumption:** the market will automatically internalize any short-term problems.
- *No environmental protection action, or individual and collective action in support of treadmill.*

Chart 4: Ecological and Social Policy Positions of Major Types of Environmental Movement Organizations

Social
Distributional
Position

ECOLOGICAL-DIALECTICAL SYNTHESIS

Economic

Managed Scarcity

Ecological

Less-
redistributive

Anti-environmentalists

Cosmetologists
Meliorists

Deep ecologists

More-
redistributive

Social equity

Reformists

Structuralists

Chart 5: Typical Environmental Coalitions

"LEFT":

- structural theorists, with political economic perspective
- more academic than politically active...much talk, little action
- sporadic "eco-terrorism" with no follow-up
- social justice coupled with environmental protection, but no sustained progressive social welfare movement ties

"CENTRIST":

- broad litigative and executive activities around government & private sector
- close ties with some government officials in regulatory bodies
- rhetoric of "community" protection, but reality of largely upper-middle class activists and interests.
- ecological analysis more broadly developed than social distributive analysis

"LOCALIZED":

- NIMBY-type movements protecting their own local health/safety concerns
 - mixture of health, economic, and ecological concerns, but often health is predominant
 - some recruitment into centrist movements
 - force LULUs to least mobilized and most powerless communities.
-

Chart 6: Sustainable Political Legitimacy vs. Sustainable Resistance

Sustainable resistance= The capacity to enter both markets & politics with an ecological agenda as a "routine" player

Requirements: Acceptance by major state and economic actors that some modification of the economic synthesis [= no environmental weighting] is politically & economically necessary

Sustainable political legitimacy = The capacity to represent social entities in markets and politics with a social as well as an environmental agenda

Requirements: Acceptance by social groups* and their movement organizations as "socially responsive", and acceptance of this representational role in politics and markets

**Can include various mixtures of classes, class segments, labor organizations, professional groups, & social equity movements*

Dynamics: *For either sustained resistance and/or sustained political legitimacy, the dynamics are generated far more by social, economic, and political changes than they are by ecological changes*

Chart 7: Historical Elements of Environmentalist Sustainability vs.

Programmatic Elements of Political Legitimacy

HISTORICAL ELEMENTS

Sustained...

Continuing mass "support"
for "environmentalism"

Lack of enduring social justice-
environmental coalition

Ecological synthesis ideologies:
"appropriate technology,"
"ecotopia," *or*
"sustained development"

MOVEMENT TACTICS :

*Higher environmental justice words,
social redistribution deeds
far below environmental
protection deeds*

PROGRAMMATIC ELEMENTS

...Legitimizing

Develop new programs for meeting
economic needs of constituents, & educating
them about their environmental risks

Listen to expressions by poorer & less-
educated groups in order to link
environmental reforms to both their use-
value & exchange-value needs

Anticipate & plan more realistically for
socially-negative as well as
environmentally-positive outcomes of
possible programs & policies

MOVEMENT STRATEGIES :

*Lower environmental justice words, with
with social redistribution deeds
comparable to environmental
protection deeds*

Chart 8: Variability in Values of the Potential Coalition Partners
that Might Sustain Environmentalist Legitimacy

<u>Social Entity</u>	<u>Dominant Value</u>	<u>Subordinate Value</u>
<i>Environmental movement organizations</i>	<i>Use</i>	<i>Exchange</i>
Economic elites	Exchange	Use
Labor groups	Exchange/use mixes	Use/exchange mixes
Social equity organizations	Exchange or use	Use or exchange
Community-based groups	Use or exchange	Exchange or use

cf. Sustainable Legitimacy: Primacy of use **or** exchange values:
a variable mixture of both is necessary
in periods of intensive economic and
political-distributive conflicts [e.g., recessions, depressions]

Organizing Principal: Temporal and spatial factors produce variation in
the mixtures of exchange-value & use-value interests
that may be legitimized in the political-economic agenda

^Endnotes

¹ In general, **any** form of environmental regulation involves some forms of *managed scarcity* (Schnaiberg, 1980: ch. VIII). That is, ecosystems are protected by reducing some forms of **access** to them, generally by economic actors seeking to increase their profits [=economic "exchange values"], and/or political actors, seeking to increase their power [=political "exchange values"] (Schnaiberg, 1992) . These increases in **scarcity of ecosystem access** for strong economic actors typically entail some trade-offs sought by these actors. They seek government subsidies or tax relief, or some market compensation (e.g., through higher prices, lower labor costs to increase profits and/or consumer labor subsidy via recycling) for these losses of cheaper ecological inputs. Because these dominant economic actors have substantial political and economic power, they effectively transfer the costs of environmental regulation/protection from their shareholders to less powerful groups in society by these political and/or economic responses. Thus, managed scarcity policies, which focus merely on "protecting the environment" without asking "at whose expense" and "for whose benefit" typically engender socially-**regressive** or **negatively**-redistributive outcomes [Schnaiberg 1980: Introduction, chs.VIII-IX].

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