



Scrappy Sustainability



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Geology & Geography / Environmental Studies
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Reflection: working on “theory into practice” sustainability projects since 1999!
Linked to classes, independent projects, etc.

Director of Environmental Studies (since 2010)

This kind of work can have a research component: but have not thought much about broader issues surrounding the “theory into practice”

This presentation is a start...

Scrappy Sustainability

No sustainability coordinator.

No courses or faculty focused on sustainability.

No sustainability plan (yet!).

No devoted budget for sustainability efforts.

Turn to

Voluntary collaboration (students, staff, faculty): Sustainability Task Force (STF).

Create and get support for a sustainability plan.

Course projects focused on sustainability.

Appropriate funds: SIP, Tipit, WCSA, Chartwells, etc.

This approach to sustainability arose in Geog 499: Sustainability Practicum



Henry Street Tunnel
ca. 2003





Mapping ambivalence: Exploring the geographies of community change and rails-to-trails development using photo-based Q method and PPGIS

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Abstract

As the literature on trail development suggests, recreational trail projects can generate conflicts and controversies, particularly when built on abandoned rail corridors through developed areas. These conflicts are often understood as “not in my back yard” (NIMBY) reactions, suggesting a spatial proximity to conflict which increases as one draws closer to the proposed trail. This research seeks to understand local residents’ perceptions and reactions to recreational trail development in the City of Delaware (Ohio, USA). It addresses two spatially infused questions: Does the potential for conflict related to trail development increase as people live closer to a potential trail (the NIMBY factor)? Can important qualitative factors about favorable and unfavorable land uses including potential recreational trail sites be defined using a participatory methodology and then represented in GIS? The study used a mixed-method approach to collect and analyze qualitative data from a group of local residents. Each participant was interviewed and asked to sort 19 pictures related to trail development. After each of the sorts, participants were asked to explain why they ranked the pictures the way they did. Results of the picture sorts were then analyzed using Q method and mapped with GIS. The results show that spatial proximity matters in the context of trail development and potential NIMBY reactions to trails. Significant differences were found in the picture sorts that reveal the importance of proximity and location, although in a manner contrary to the assumptions in the writings on rails-to-trails. Through combining qualitative methods, Q analysis and PPGIS analysis, the research shows that qualitative place-based studies are capable of generating insights about the complexities of situated geographic change such as recreational trail development.

Keywords: GIS; Qualitative method; Q method; PPGIS; Recreational trails; Ohio

Research paper on
Rails to Trails

Reaction against rails-to-trails conversions: complicated!
Trails seen as replacing economically important rails - decline of an old, important industry



Proposal for Environment & Sustainability Program (April 10, 2017)

Summary and Overview

An expanded Environmental Studies Program proposal was reviewed by affected Departments in the Fall of 2016. Costs include a \$1000 budget for the proposed new Environmental Science major and three part time units and summer funding for assistance with developing and teaching the revised program's three core courses: ENVS 110 (new), ENVS 198/498 (new) and BOMI 233 (revised). Upon implementation of these changes, the impact on enrollment will be assessed and the potential of adding a three year position with associated courses and curriculum development will be considered.

Program → **Environment & Sustainability**
Majors → Environmental Studies Environmental Science

Change the program name of Environmental Studies to Environment & Sustainability

Environment & Sustainability Program to include **two majors each with its own Director**:

Maintain Environmental Studies major: Major to remain largely the same as current Environmental Studies major. A multidisciplinary major with a balance of courses from the social and natural sciences, humanities and arts. Maintain Environmental Studies minor. Remove 2nd major requirement.

Maintain Director of Environmental Studies position: Currently, John Krygier (Geology & Geography): Named by Provost and open to any OWU faculty member regardless of division. Maintain current budget (\$1000). Maintain a steering committee for the major (currently three faculty members).

New Environmental Science major: A new major designed by OWU faculty, drawing from existing OWU courses and including the new courses described in this proposal. A multidisciplinary, stand-alone major with an emphasis on natural science courses.

New Director of Environmental Science position: A new position to be named by Provost. Position open to any OWU faculty member with a natural science degree. \$1000 budget. Director will name a steering committee for the major (three faculty members).

New and modified courses. These courses will help maintain connections between students in the two majors and also connect new majors and senior majors (cornerstone and capstone experiences).

- **Required new course: ENVS 110: Introduction to Environment & Sustainability** (1 unit).
- **Required revised course: BOMI 233: Ecology and the Human Future** (1 unit).
- **Elective: Change course discipline & number: ENVS 399: Sustainability Practicum** (1 unit).
- **Elective new course: ENVS 493: Topics in Environment & Sustainability** (1 unit).
- **Elective new course: ENVS 494: Topics in Environment & Sustainability** (.5 unit).
- **Required new course: ENVS 198/498: Conversations: Toward a Sustainable Future** (0.25 unit, taken upon electing major [198] and senior [498] year).

Revised & Expanded Environment & Sustainability Program

Originally had a three-year faculty position in sustainability. But modified after that position was no longer available.

Take advantage of faculty with some sustainability interests, create a framework for expansion





The poster child for sustainability at OWU is our campus garden.

Zombie Groundhog Day

Good intentions, but never permanent: wasted energy (unless one looks at this as all about individuals)

Persistent enthusiasm for sustainability projects at OWU. But...

It's easy to start projects, but hard to make real things happen.

Lots of started projects, few completed.

It takes time. More than a semester, more than a year.

It costs money to make things happen (but can be relatively cheap)

It's hard to sustain projects once established.

Success requires collaboration.

It's easy to get pessimistic.

Individual action is largely ineffective.

Some pearls from my experiences here over the past 10+ years

Thinking about all the sustainability and environmental projects + some deeper thoughts from readings (Geog 360)

Look at those last two issues in more detail

The Fanaticism of the Apocalypse Pascal Bruckner



Pessimism, or worse...

Pascal Bruckner, *The Fanaticism of the Apocalypse* (2013)

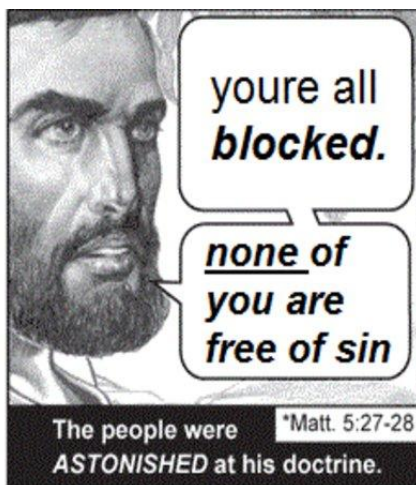
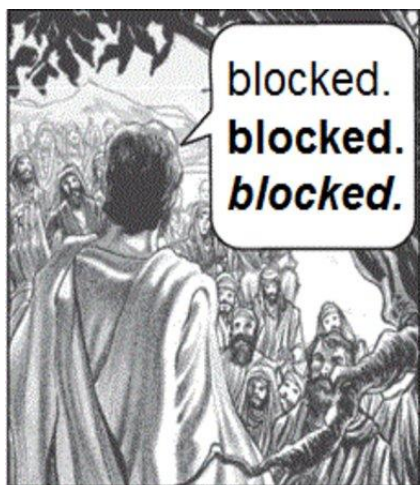
Humans are a cancer on the earth. We are invasive species. We are parasites. We are all going to die and we deserve it.

Our carbon footprint is “the gaseous equivalent of Original Sin, ...the stain that we inflict on Mother Gaia by the simple fact of being present and breathing...” (2)

“Western humanity has taken a sudden dislike for itself.” (2)

An era of ecological apocalyptic catastrophism.

Bruckner explores the anti-humanistic tendencies of environmentalists



Pessimism, or worse

“Saving the world requires us to denigrate everything that has to do with the spirit of enterprise and the taste for discovery.” (15)

“A vision of the earth as an impoverished family that has to scrimp on everything in order to get along. A rehabilitation of meanness and stinginess.” (151)

“Ecology has a choice: declaring anti-humanism as its principle, celebrating rivers and forests the better to castigate human beings, or adopting an open anthropocentrism that embraces humanity, nature, and animals in general good will, so that no category suffers pointless harm.” (100)

The point in general: move away from the humans vs nature discourse, move towards substantive integration



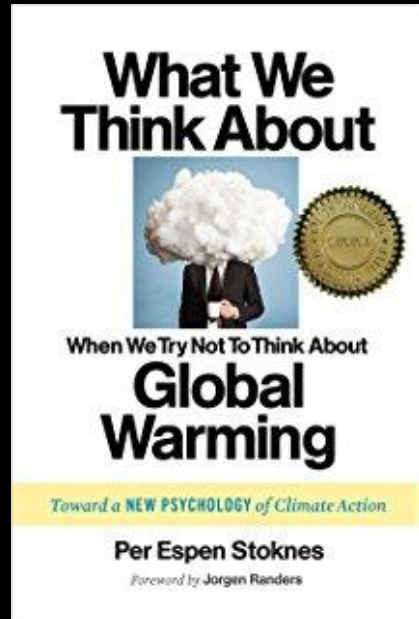
Individual action is largely ineffective

We can't opt out of the system, we like the perks.

The message we hear: we are individually responsible for collective economic system impacts on the environment.

Cognitive dissonance: painless behavior (reusable grocery bags, recycling, etc.) that allows us to feel we are doing our part - and to avoid despair and pessimism.

“Individual solutions are insufficient or even counterproductive unless they contribute to structural changes, too.” (Stoknes, p. 89)



Focus is on global warming, but I think it applies broadly to sustainability

The problem: It's a social psychological issue

Stoknes, *What We Think About...* (2015)

Distance: environmental problems are often far from us and in the future: humans are not good at dealing with the future, nor things remote from us.

Doom: framing climate warming as a disaster to be addressed by loss, cost, and sacrifice forces most people to avoid the topic: humans are loss-adverse.

Dissonance: when we can't resolve what we do with what we think; engage in symbolic but largely ineffectual activities (recycling, reusable grocery bags, etc.).

Denial: that there is a problem at all; humans do this in self-defense, believing that their livelihoods and lifestyles are being attacked.

Identity: humans seek information that strengthens existing belief and identity; identity is difficult to change; easy to be offended if you think your identity is being attacked; fear of and anger about being "controlled" by others. (82)

Stoknes is not arguing for pathologizing certain viewpoints or beliefs.

Some solutions:

Social: use the power of social networks.

Supportive: employ frames that support the message in a positive way.

Simple: environmentally friendly behaviors easy and convenient.

Story-based: meaning and community created by the power of stories.

Signals: use indicators for feedback on societal response.

Solution: Act as Social Citizens.

“Pushing changes in personal behavior as the main solution ... can also make us complacent and less vocal for change at the political and social level.” (91)

Proposed OWU Sustainability Plan
Students, Faculty, Staff on STF, in courses, 2+ years

Ohio Wesleyan University

March 29, 2017

Sustainability Plan

As a liberal arts higher education institution, Ohio Wesleyan University must strive to promote sustainability through educational, technical, and social means. The Ohio Wesleyan Sustainability Plan is intended to invigorate and expand a culture of sustainability on campus with an eye on the future of humans and the earth's environment.

- 1** Commit to a Sustainable Future on Campus and in the Community
 - Strengthen Environmental Studies Program
 - Fund sustainability coordinator with support & facilities by 2020
 - 5% yearly growth in student sustainability involvement
- 2** Reduce Our Impact on Global Climate Change
 - Commit to energy-efficient building investments
 - Utilize 5% solar or renewable energy on campus by 2020
 - Install solar panels on campus for learning purposes
 - Annual student run energy reduction challenge initiated in 2017
- 3** Increase Our Health and Well-being
 - Commit to a farm and food collaboration with Stratford Ecological Center and the Methodist Theological School's Seminary Hill Farm by 2017
 - Purchase 15% of campus food from local and regional sources by 2020
 - Develop a long-term plan for composting by 2018
 - Maintain and grow student-run Food Recovery Network and related programs
- 4** Live Better on Campus and on Earth
 - Develop Sustainable Living model residence option by 2019
 - OWU activity courses on sustainable practices by 2017
 - Maintain and expand May Move Out
 - New campus bird, animal, insect and plant habitat enhancement each year
 - Expand reusable container program for campus food by 20% each year

The voluntary work is spread around, taking advantage of different skill sets, collectively created (rather than the work of one person, or based on external criteria.)

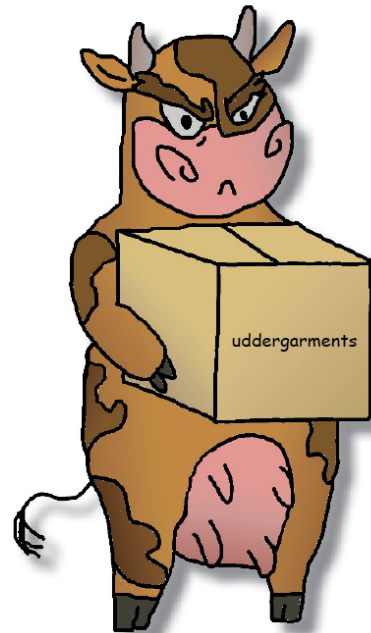
Solution: Supportive Frames

“I have a nightmare” way of communicating environmental concern is not effective.

Instead focus on insurance, health, security, preparedness, and opportunity (111)



May Move Out
3+ years



In the case of May Move Out: it's about donations to a good cause.

Solution: Keep it Simple

Modify “choice situations” to make green options easy: Green nudges.

As long as there are few opportunities for easy green behavior, and the message causes fear and guilt, there will be backlash against the message. (64)

Green carryout food containers
2+ years



The struggle to make the use of reusable containers simple.

Solution: Social Signals

In the presence of others, behavior, attention, and performance are changed. Social attention is a very powerful motivator. (55)

People have to be convinced that many others are Doing something, and it is the norm, before they change their behavior. (31)

Hydration stations
5+ years

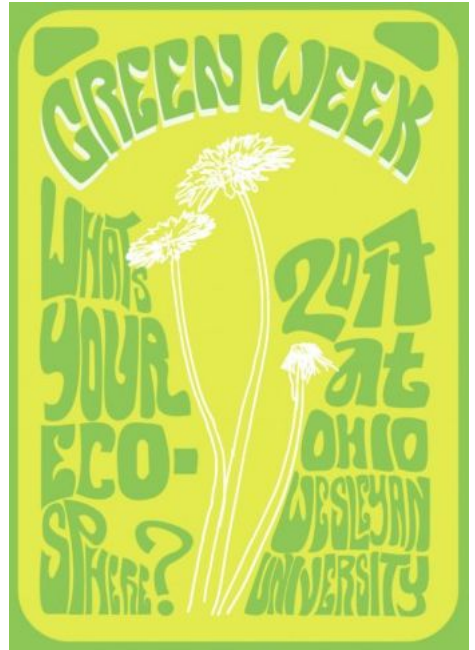


Carrying a water bottle is OK.

Solution: Stories

Meaning and community created by the power of stories.

OWU's Green Week
5+ years



Emergence of stories on campus: May Move Out, Green Containers, Green Week, maybe even the sustainability plan

The problem of identity & sustainability

People with hierarchical and individualistic values tend to be skeptical of environmental risks and to dislike regulations to limit those risks, since regulations restrict free choice, commerce, and industry.

People with egalitarian and communitarian values see commerce and industry as self-interested and polluting entities that create unjust disparity, and which require regulation. (73)

Conservatives or libertarians don't question climate science (and other environmental concerns) because they are ignorant. Rather, it is a way of expressing who they are - their identity. (74)



Even if we do all those things (social citizens, supportive frames, simplicity, signals)...

The hippie, counter-culture, eco-warrior image ...



Scrappy Sustainability?

Students, staff and faculty figure out how to make sustainability happen on campus with no full time staff and few funds: sustainability isn't going to get done otherwise, at least in the short term. It is a good experience to try to make something real happen under challenging circumstances.

Benefits to distributed, community-based sustainability

- diverse group of active collaborators (vs. dependence on sustainability coordinator).
- many people involved: less likelihood of any one person getting in trouble.
- many people involved: diversity of ideas and approaches.
- excellent theory-into-practice experiences.
- it is possible to get some things done, maybe more meaningful.
- there is something a bit troubling about high-cost, conspicuous sustainability.
- building a strong foundation for sustainability, into which a sustainability coordinator could step, and make even more progress.



