

Lecture 7: State and Policy & Env. Inequality

February 2, 2016

Prof. Salamat Tabbasum
Environmental Sociology
SOC3105A

Email: salamat.tabbasum@uottawa.ca

Systemic Causes of Environmental Disruption

- **The State and Policy: Imperialism, Exclusion, and Ecological Violence as State Policy**
- What do you understand by the State and Policy in relation to the environment?
- Environmental Policies e.g. Clean Air Act etc?
- Role of the US nation-state as an institution – that advances the causes of imperialism and ecological violence (Pellow 2009)
- State imperialist policy as environmental policy
- **Pluralist state:** associated with Alexis de Tocueville and Robert Dahl
 - politics in a democracy is a process in which various associations (trade unions, business groups, churches) engage in a competition for access to state resources and governmental control
- **Pluralism** involves groups sharing power with the state thus avoiding dominance by government or by any particular interest group

- Interest groups strive to influence state policy making through this process
 - thus allowing citizens venues for multiple channels for voicing their concerns
- Political process in the US is often less pluralist
- Allan Schnaiberg and Kenneth Gould theoretical framework:
 - How market forces and political institutions interact to produce ecological disorganization while creating wealth and power for a minority of persons and lower wages and less power for the majority
- Treadmill of production - observe the increasing accumulation of wealth and investments into capital intensive technologies
- All of which are encouraged and facilitated by the nation-state

- Capitalist societies: deeply antiecological and antihumanist (treadmill model)
- Though ecological problems are visible, the social costs are less apparent
- To increase profits: ignore polluting processes and reduce labor costs
 - By introducing computer automation, cutting wages, downsizing employment rolls, and reducing workers' benefits
 - Hence increasing economic inequality and instability nationally and globally
- E.g. increase in number of temporary workers in the last two decades
- The richest 2500 people on the planet possess as much wealth as do the poorest 2.5 billion
 - 1% of the population of the US possess around 40% of the wealth in that country
 - 20% own 80% of the wealth
 - And real wages have declined since 1970s

- State has been offering billions of dollars in subsidies to corporations
- The ideology of economic growth at all costs: a dominant theme
- Hence, less political will or sympathy for downsized workers
- Post-1945 – private capitals demand for labor, strong trade unions, safe working conditions, expanded public education... good economic times
- Economic globalization – pressure on industry and government

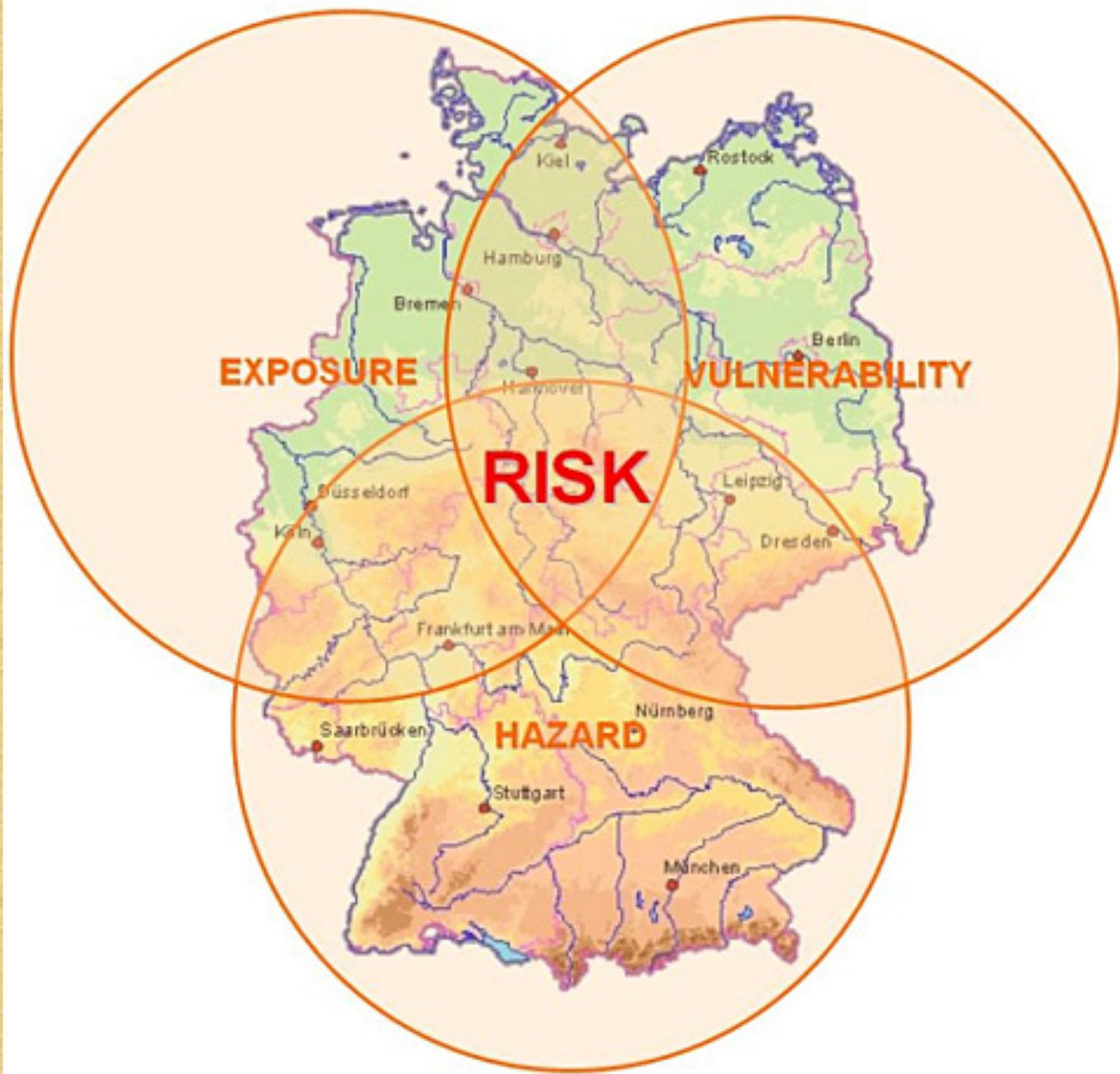
- 1960s – changes in treadmill from its post-1945 structure –
 - effect on pact between management and labor that ensured high wage
- Increasing global economic competition – industry to cut costs, downsizing
- Hence, companies moved to lower-cost regions of the country or other nations –
 - led to massive unemployment in urban areas – economic downturns during the 1970s-1990s
- An exponential increase in the use of chemicals and toxins in industrial production (weak environmental regulations) –
 - culminating in urban and rural wastelands
- Unemployment in urban areas, abandoned factories in large areas, and toxic hotspots
- Ecological and social disruption

- Treadmill of production: produces and reinforces social and economic inequalities locally, nationally and globally
- Environmental Justice studies: focuses on a subset of concerns associated with the impacts of the treadmill of production
- Environmental Justice studies: emphasis on
 - unequal approaches of market-based,
 - state economic and environmental policy making on people of color, indigenous populations and the working class/poor
- Environmental inequality – a population is affected by environmental harm and is excluded from environmental decision-making
- Such populations comprise society's political, economic, and cultural margins
- Quantitative and empirical evidence of social disparities in the distribution of pollution in the US
- 1980s studies: links between pollution and race, proximity of hazardous waste sites to communities of color – environmental racism

The Risk Society

- Late modernity:
 - witness an exponential increase in the production of and use of hazardous chemical substances
- They emanate from the state and industry to civil society through production,
 - consumption and disposal practices – increasing the level of social and physical risk

- Ulrich Beck:
 - risk is a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself
- Risks are created by decisions instead of naturally occurring hazards e.g. famines, floods, which plague other societies
- Modern societies take deliberate risks; risk is endemic
- They rely on scientific knowledge
 - but most people don't fully understand this type of knowledge
- Knowledge and technology race ahead, people are left behind;
 - unable to understand and control the machines on which they depend
- Lack of knowledge in people leads to mystification of science (Beck)



- US – the world’s leading producer and exporter of toxic waste for over two decades
 - With an estimated 500 million tons
- In the late 1980s and 1990s, US produced more than one ton of hazardous waste for every child, woman and man in the nation
- To be modern: requires subjugation and control over certain populations designated as others
- Manipulation of the natural and social worlds or linked through the benefits that toxic systems of production produce for the privileged
- The idea of a nation-state is rooted in **sovereignty**:
 - ability to self-govern and to determine their own fate without interference from others

- Very often a powerful nation's practices prohibit another nation from self-governance
 - so to gain access to ecological resources, in addition to consumer and labor markets
- US nation-state and adoption of capitalism: social impacts
- **Catherine MacKinnon**: state (police, military, legal institutions) as gendered –
 - it has predominantly male orientation, men constitute majority of people in positions of authority – and state works to protect men
- State as a gendered institution in its relation to nature
- US and EU states engage nature through ideologies and practices of domination
- Carole Pateman's the **Sexual Contract**: EU states were founded on a sexual contract – the exclusion of women from public spheres of power

- Carol Merchant: Western cultures imagine and behave toward nature
- People were meant to dominate nature – emerging from the enlightenment period
- David Harvey: domination is not so much about dominating or controlling the environment or nature –
 - domination of humans by other humans is accomplished
- Hence, the rich rule the poor, men control women, powerful nations control over weaker nations –
 - it is accomplished through the resources and power ultimately derived from human exploitation of the environment

- Exploitation of people and exploitation of the environment are linked (env. Justice studies)
- Environmental integrity of working class neighbourhoods and, indigenous lands and communities is harmed by state and corporate practices
- European Americans founded the US nation state – through, partially, acts of Africans and Native Americans
- Mills (1999):
 - If we take the nation as a body metaphor seriously, what about those parts of the national body that are viewed as surplus, as waste?
 - They can be discarded as other form of waste?

- If the people are themselves are viewed as dirty, filthy, and disposable,
 - the environmental racism and injustice are perfectly rational state practices
- Hence, exclusion of certain populations from power and citizenship –
 - least desirable persons in the last desirable spaces (treadmill of production)
- Majority of people in neighbourhoods hosting hazardous facilities are people of color (2000 report)
- US state is not operating on pluralist principles – but to further the interest of some groups over others –
 - which extends beyond the US border

- Imperialism: a system of foreign power in which another culture people and way of life penetrate, transform, and come to define a colonized society
- Caribbean basin; US virtual sphere of influence
- Latin American leaders and environmental:
 - US pursues a similar agenda with continued proclamations of bringing democracy and freedom to nations around the world
- Conquest is not only by a desire for consumer markets and cheap labor
 - but also by a thirst for access to **ecological wealth** in the form of rich natural resources in the global south
- Expansionist tendencies of 1830s and 1840s:
 - continue through today with free-trade agreements and proxy wars the U.S. military and corporations are waging in Americas
- Two centuries of intensified siphoning of natural resources and economic wealth from south

- US most economically privileged nation on the planet:
 - Extraction of copper from Chile
 - Woods from Brazil
 - Oil from Mexico, Venezuela, Ecuador
 - Tin from Bolivia
 - Sugar from Cuba
 - Bananas from Costa Rica, Honduras
 - Beef from Argentina
- Imperial arrangement: great poverty in Latin America and ecological toll –
 - deforestation, oil spills, air pollution, soil erosion, species extinction and violence
- The decision in the US Supreme Court's Johnson v. McIntosh case:
 - The right of native peoples to their lands is diminished and that sovereignty of discoverers was inherently superior to that of indigenous peoples – Justice Marshall's doctrine
- Dawes Severalty Act of 1887 – FG began registering Indians and forcing them to live on lands that were subdivided into individual private lots
- Unemployment, alcoholism, domestic violence, rape, suicide, etc are high in Native American communities today

- **Colombian** government and Los Angeles Petroleum: drill for oil on traditional lands of the indigenous U'wa people
- Former V.P. Al Gore's stocks in the Occidental Petroleum Company
- U'wa opposition – collective suicide if not stopped – die than to see their culture and homeland destroyed
- US human rights organization and global campaign
- Project did not go ahead
- Kanaka Maoli (Hawaii) – Natives live in a state that hosts more hazardous waste sites than any other US state
- Destruction of native fisheries
- Between 1964 and 1973 – 4.8 million gallons of hazardous waste (radioactive) released into Pearl Harbour from submarines

Environmental Inequality and Environmental Justice

- Uneven distribution of environmental pollution among different social groups
- Neoliberal policies as a major contributing factor in the production of environmental injustices
- Indigenous people more likely to live in close proximity to hazardous environmental facilities
- Relationship between environmental pollution and health problems – Love Canal (NY), Three Mile Island (Pennsylvania) etc
- Nearly 70,000 chemical products have been introduced since the WWII and 1500 added each year
- Total US production of Chemicals 300 million tons annually
- Nuclear landscape encompasses most of the southwest , New Mexico, Nevada, south eastern California, parts of Arizona, Utah, Colorado
- Southern Ontario (Sarnia-Windsor-London) triangle: landfill, as well as a 4 million gallon per day sewage treatment plant

LOVE CANAL RECIPE:
1. MIX 82 CHEMICALS
2. PLACE IN CANAL FOR
25 YRS.
YIELD: SICKNESS + DEATH

PLEASE
HELP
ME



- US Environmental Protection Agency 2007
 - The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies
- 1982 – major protest in Warren County – North Carolina – PCB landfill in a majority African American town
- Several hundred protesters, incl. high profile civil rights activists, arrested
- 1983 report; found a disproportionate amount of landfills (about three out of four) were located near predominantly minority communities
- 1987 – Study, Toxic Wastes and Race in the US: found race was the most significant factor in determining where waste facilities were located in the US
- 3 out of five African Americans and Hispanic Americans lived in communities with one or more uncontrolled toxic waste sites
- 50% Asians/Pacific Islander Americans Native Americans lived in such communities



- UNDP report on poverty and environmental inequality: *Beyond Scarcity: Power, Poverty and the Global Water Crisis*
 - Crisis of water and sanitation is the crisis of poor over the world
- Local struggles: closing of large polluting industries – e.g. waste incinerators and landfills in LA, and Chicago
- Local organizations and regional networks and partnerships with institutions such as schools, churches
- National Environmental Policy: Clinton signed Executive Order charging all federal agencies with integrating environmental justice concerns into their operations
- Globalization and transnational capitalism; growth of multilateral and international trade agreements – undermined local govt. attempts to regulate environmental and public health conditions
 - Connected the local with the global in uneven and unjust ways
- **Lawrence Summers** – retired chief economist WB –
 - WB should encourage the movement of pollution from the rich core countries to those of the periphery – because the cost of illness associated with pollution would be less in marginalized communities – so export dirty industries to those

- Neoliberalism and Environmental Justice
- Contemporary environmental governance reform (referred to as Neoliberalism) and
- Contemporary environmental and social injustices (that neoliberalism produces)
- Growth of large industrial feedlots in rural areas – livestock farms in southwestern Ontario – highest in the province
- Energy; another predominant activity in southwestern Ontario
- Sarnia River – chemical alley – Canada’s largest concentration of petrochemical industries and associated water and air pollution
- 1974 and 1986 – 32 major spills, 300 minor ones, contributed to 10 tons of pollutants in the St. Clair River

- Neoliberal reform in Ontario has reduced monitoring and reporting requirements for industry
 - impaired the ability of provincial ministries and local agencies
- Neoliberal reform in Ontario reduced or eliminated opportunities for public participation in land use decisions
- Indigenous people are increasingly becoming the target of the externalized social and environmental costs associated with neoliberal policy reform
- Internal colonialism – US (Kuletz)

