The Justice of Environmental Justice:
An Australian/US Comparison

Presented by
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My Take-home

Environmental Justice is never only about equity
Movements always articulate a range of conceptions of justice

- Equity, yes, but also:
- Recognition and respect
- Exclusion from political processes and decision making
- Concern for a range of basic needs and capabilities
Theorizing Environmental Justice: Environment

Environment as external nature, forests, wilderness, outside
Environment as “where we live, work, and play”

In the US, a dichotomy, eventually coming together
In Australia, holding on to external nature, now part of EJ

The important link between ecological stability and community functioning
- Coal trains through Newcastle: health, devastation of Hunter, climate change
- Hazelwood fire: air pollution and health, unsustainability of mining

The combination of a traditional conception of environment AND places
where our lives and cultures are immersed
Theorizing Environmental Justice: Justice

The plurality of conceptions of justice
- Equity/unequal distribution
- Recognition: discrimination, disrespect
- Exclusion: lack of participation, demands for voice and seat at the table
- Capabilities/functioning: basic needs of individuals and communities
  - Health, jobs, clean air and water...

Conceptions of justice raised in coal seam gas movement
- Recognition: A way of life is devalued
- Exclusion: Agency as citizens taken away, government is corrupted by the mining companies, government actually creating barriers to participation
- Functioning: impacts on health, threats to water
The Relationship Between Environment and Justice

A shift in the conception of the relationship
- Initially, inequity/unequal distribution as a *symptom* of social injustice
- Later, a functioning environment as the underlying *condition* of social justice

Community movements illustrate the connection between environment and justice
- Yes, it’s about unequal exposure as a symptom of social injustice
- But groups also see threats to a working environment as a threat to the basic environmental conditions necessary for just communities.
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