

# The Article Prize and Themes in Contemporary Social Research on Environment

This is a short report of a workshop based around the winning papers in this year's Climate Change Study Group article prize competition. The workshop celebrated the 2013 winning articles inviting discussion of the articles and themes they address, as well as the writing process itself, and ending with a prize giving ceremony for the winning articles. The prizes were book vouchers and the much coveted CCSG article prize medals.

This year the first prize went to an international author, Matthew Fry, based in the US at the University of North Texas. Given the geographical distance we arranged the first prize by post and email (don't worry he still received his medal)!

Nominated articles for this year's prize covered a wide range of topics including; critical engagement with Giddens's Politics of Climate Change; eco-psychology; transitions and the multi-level perspective in transport studies; social representations as an approach to understanding how the public engages with climate change; environmental sustainability in the 2012 Olympic games; and climate change denial and conservative think tanks.

Our winning articles focused on the following diverse areas of concern:

The first prize article examined cement production as a case study through which to explore processes of socio-technical transition. It used 'discursive regulation' as an analytical lens for understanding how power dynamics underlying carbon-intensive regimes often forestall sustainable transitions and keep industries locked into unsustainable practices. Ultimately, the paper shows how the cement industry uses power to discursively regulate cement consumption, which both fosters socio-technical regime path dependency and prevents the sustainable transition of the industry (Fry, 2013).

The second prize article explored the extent to which increases in an environmental rhetoric within workspaces has been accompanied by a meaningful shift in organizational practices. The paper looked at the place of sustainability within workspace transformation, engaging with Lefebvre and Foucault to argue that 'green' has frequently become bound up with 'lean' and 'mean' within organizational discourses and imaginations (Leonard, 2013).

The third prize article examined how the claim of a two degree dangerous limit for climate change was being represented within the public sphere. The results demonstrate that public representations of the two degree limit idea have not evolved, despite developments in climate science casting doubt on the veracity of the two degree limit. The paper concludes that framing climate policy within the two degree metric is not delivering the hoped for emission reductions and it may therefore be appropriate for public discourses to recognise the role of non-scientific factors in defining how much climate change is dangerous (Shaw, 2013).

This year we also awarded two commendations for articles that narrowly missed the winning spots. These articles examined the water resources and the ways in which particular branches of social science can be brought together to offer a model of 'distributed demand' that helps explain current and future uncertainties in water demand and supply processes, and the role

of identity processes in determining how people process social representations of climate change, and mediate environmental action.

## **The Workshop**

The workshop involved the winning authors leading discussion about their articles and the process of writing, including where their ideas had developed from. Notably the ideas and research for these articles had a long heritage originating in broadly formulated reflections and being developed over several years. One had begun life while the author was working outside of academia beginning with a broad questioning of how climate change was being constructed as an issue and what this meant for achieving change. Others had their conception in interdisciplinary working contexts which brought to light the possibilities for combining insights from different disciplinary perspectives.

The workshop moved to focus on discussion of themes that could be identified as cross cutting through the winning articles. A theme connecting many of the articles was a concern with questions about how to achieve change, with each article speaking to this from very distinct conceptual positions. In the workshop this formed a focus for discussion with key points being expressed around how far different actors, across state, business and civil society can be seen as conduits for change; the importance of justice concerns relevant to low carbon transitions, including those embedded in decisions to set targets for a 2 degree world; and issues related to those lives and livelihoods dependent on unsustainable systems (e.g. oil workers) as transitions unfold.

A second theme discussed in the workshop concerned participation and the need for more inclusive approaches to the governance of climate change. This entailed discussion again of justice issues inherent in transitions and the significance of incorporating different values positions within transition narratives, as well as questions about what participation means for practice and how it might be conceptualised in terms that go beyond more formal notions of participatory processes (i.e. as a set of processes that could be embedded within existing societal structures and practices).

The workshop provided an opportunity to discuss new research and articles that represent the current social research on environmental issues. Notable is that much contemporary work in this area focuses on building insight into how change might be achieved - an important set of questions which sociological concepts and research are well placed to address.