

# Environmental Ethics and Land Management

ENVR E-120

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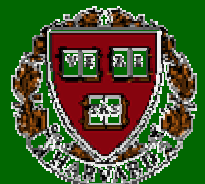
## Our Historical Context: Colonialism, Imperialism and Sprawl

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Session 5 – Part 2  
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# The “European Miracle?”

Thus, the “European miracle” is born...

Big Historical Question: “What accounts for European exceptionalism? That is, why did Europe ‘lead’?”

One (essentially political) Answer...

Unlike other areas (China, India, the Middle under Ottoman-Turkish rule), the fragmentation of Europe meant that one of the most convenient and effective forms of competitive survival for royal aristocracies was to search outwards for new sources of established forms of wealth and novel forms as well.

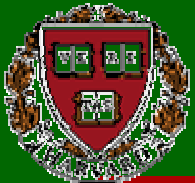


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## A Royal-Charter $\Leftrightarrow$ Bourgeois Revolution

Remembering, then, the nested, reciprocal and cumulative kinds of causation that we are sensitive to in ecosystems, it is understandable that European political weakness combined with the emergence of moneyed trading classes, sought to base power on *new* sources of wealth obtained *outside* and beyond the realms of political control.

Discovery, innovation, change, and movement become positively valued and a major shift in Europe's historical "worldview" that emerges.



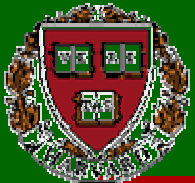
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## The “Colonial Worldview”

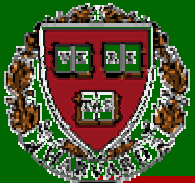
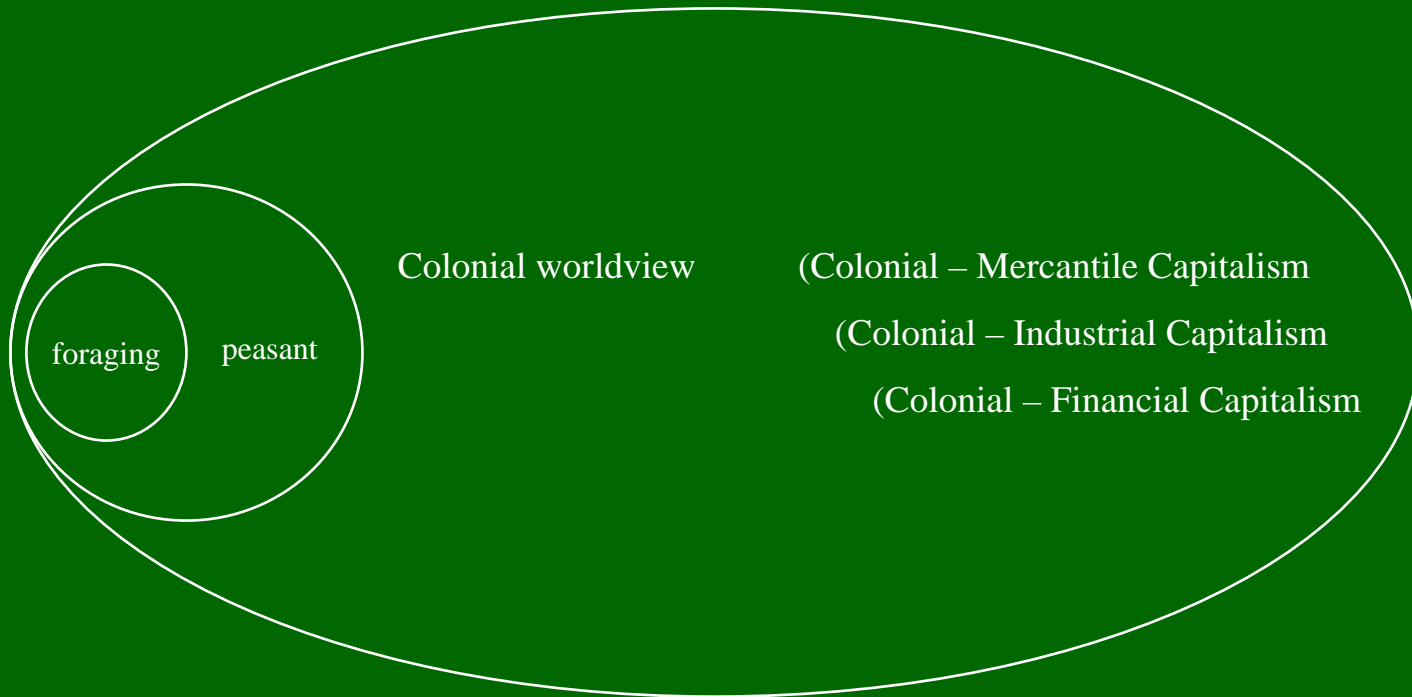
The dominant worldview that emerges out of the 500 years of experience since 1492 is still with us today.

It differs from -- but does not entirely displace -- the peasant worldview born of the neolithic revolution.

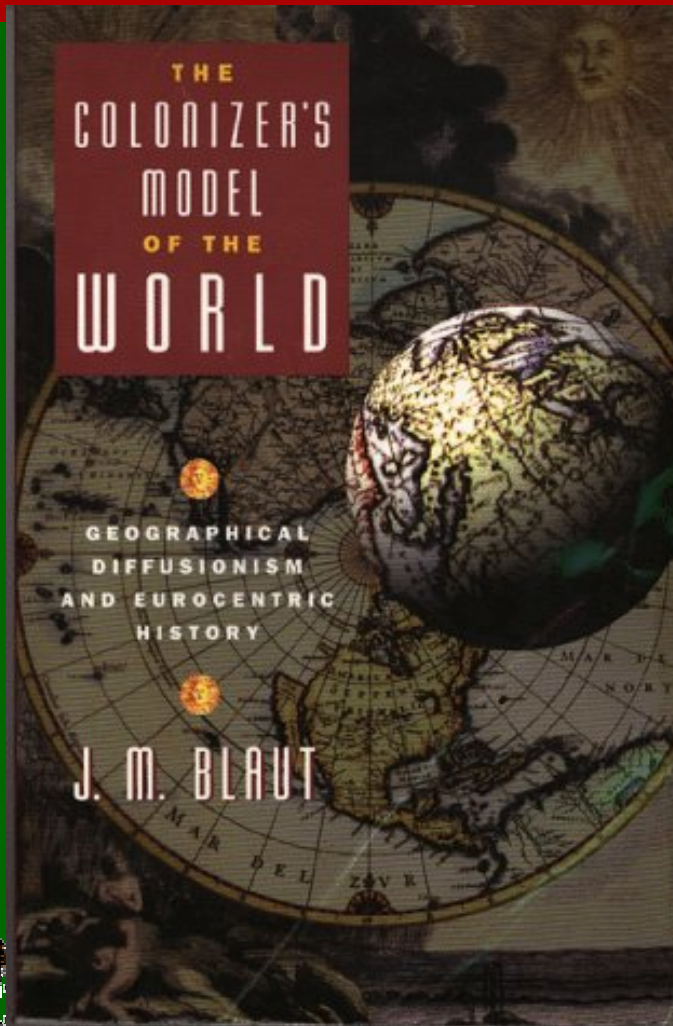
In many cases it extends and expands that earlier worldview. But in other respects it totally subverts that worldview.



# Historical Evolution of Worldviews



# What are its key components?



Numerous books abound to characterize the worldview of the colonizers, and it would be presumptuous to attempt to summarize all of Western European thought in this course.

Nevertheless,...

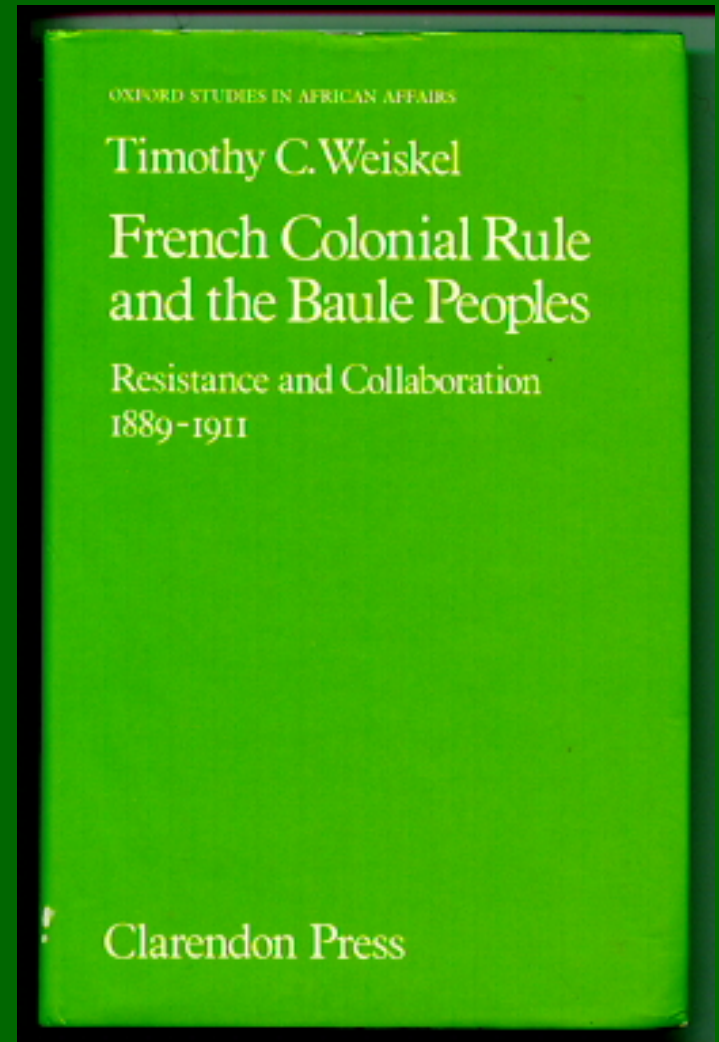


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## Colonialism can be studied as an ecological phenomenon

The careful study of modern colonialism -- especially as an ecological phenomenon -- is a basic necessity for understanding the ecological worldview of Americans today.

Most of the time those who thought they were in charge were acting out roles on the ecological stage of which they were only vaguely conscious, and certainly did not control.



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# The approach is three-fold

This includes

==> Cultural Ecology (emic approach)

==> Ecological Anthropology (etic approach)

==> Ecology of Culture (historical approach)

Effort is to understand the origin, function and persistence of cultural beliefs about the environment and how these beliefs condition individual and collective behavior.





*Agents of Empire:  
Steps Toward an Ecology  
of Imperialism*

Timothy C. Weiskel

The first step to understanding man is to consider him as a biological entity which has existed on this globe, affecting, and in turn affected by his fellow organisms, for many thousands of years.

Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange* (1972)

When contemplating the invasion of continents and islands and seas by plants and animals and their microscopic parasites, one's impression is of dislocation, unexpected consequences, and increase in the complexity of ecosystems already difficult enough to understand by alone control, and the piling up of new human difficulties.

If we look far enough ahead, the eventual state of the biological world will become not more complex but simpler—and poorer.

Charles S. Epton, *The Ecology of Invasions* (1958)



European mercantilism was based on the discovery, appropriation, transport, cultivation and sale of exotic plants, animals and animal products -- purposeful and sustained ecological disruption.

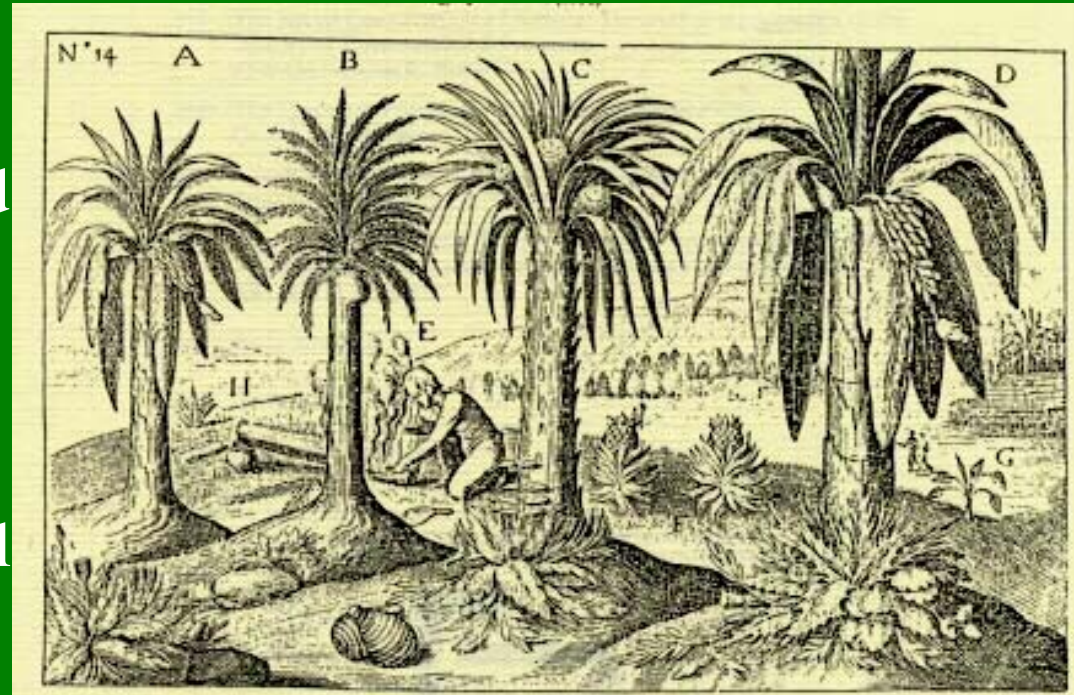
The 'Age of Discovery' was largely an age of ecological discovery -- and disruption. Europeans and their trading counterparts acted brutally to transform the ecosystems around the world.

We are heirs to this cultural tradition....



# Colonialism was built on plantation agriculture

From 1492 (and before), Europeans observed native usage and looked to the 'economic' value of new and exotic plants (sugar, coffee, pepper, bananas, tea, etc.) Some 'introductions' were intentional -- most were not. We are heirs to these cultural habits of behavior and thought....





# Our concepts of race emerge from the culture of colonialism as well....

TIMOTHY C. WEISKEL

## Rubbish and Racism: Problems of Boundary in an Ecosystem

We had fed the heart on fantasies:  
The heart's grown brutal from the fare.

W. B. Yeats, *Meditations in Time of Civil War*

**I**n an age of mounting racial tensions and in the presence of an impending environmental crisis, it may seem irresponsible for anthropologists to fly off to remote corners of the world and continue their studies of people who, even if they do survive, will have no effect upon the world's major problems. As research money becomes scarce, government agencies and foundations appear to agree that such field work is a luxury they can ill afford. Anthropologists, of course, have always maintained that their research has been intimately bound up with the total human condition, and if their peoples have been remote and their theories esoteric, this has been so only in order to offer a fresh approach to the problems we all face daily. If anthropologists have been right, then they should have something to offer concerning two of the major crises which confront us: the growth of racism and the threat of irreversible environmental pollution.

Environmental problems and racist thinking are deeply related in western culture.

No effective effort can be made to address environmental issues without addressing the social experience of racism in this culture's history.



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What is the ‘Colonial worldview’ in these structural categories of perception?

*Implicit theories*

*Colonial Worldview*

**Community**

The moral community is made up of those who share in the effort of discover, conquer and dominate ‘wild’ or untamed nature.

**System**

The system consists of various moral communities which are also engaged in this competition or which are destined to be subdued by it. All of this is played out in a vastly expanded natural world of plentiful resources that are there simply for the appropriation.

**Authority**

Authority is vested in competing sovereignties which settle disputes by treaty, alliance or warfare. Nothing like the authority of power.

**Change**

Change occurs through the invention of new sailing techniques, manufacturing technology and willful innovation. Change is good -- and necessary – for competitive survival of rival trading powers. Growth for the sake of growth is good – stored as “money” .

**Agency**

The “Lord helps those who help themselves.” Explorers, discoverers and innovators are valued as agents of change.

**Time**

The focus is neither upon the past nor the remote future, but upon the present and the immediate future in which plans for growth, innovation and measurable expansion can be realized. The “New World” is a “New Heaven and a New Earth” -- Messianic communities abound.



# Elements of Early Colonial Worldview

## *Implicit theories*

### **Community**

The moral community is made up of those who share in the effort to discover, conquer, exploit and dominate ‘wild’ or untamed nature.

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The system consists of various moral communities which are also engaged in this competition or which are destined to be subdued by it. All of this is played out in a vastly expanded natural world of plentiful resources that are there simply for the appropriation.

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# Industrial Capital Worldview

## *Implicit theories*

### **Community**

The moral community is made up of those who work to develop industrial processes with new labor-saving devices. Entrepreneurs

### **System**

The system consists of various other industrial entrepreneurs engaged in competition. Natural world is a resource base for industrial processes. Plants, animals and minerals are “raw materials.”

### **Authority**

Authority is vested in nation-states under elected governments or constitutional monarchies whose role is to facilitate industrial development

### **Change**

Change occurs through the invention of manufacturing technology through invention and the application of science for willful innovation. Change is good -- and necessary – for competitive survival of rival industrial powers. Growth for the sake of growth is a goal .

### **Agency**

The state and the entrepreneurial classes need to act together. The state should act to facilitate and “free up” the potential for industrial growth.

### **Time**

The focus is upon the immediate future in which plans for growth, innovation and measurable expansion can be realized. The preindustrial past becomes “outdated.” The system moves toward the “new” and innovative. The “modern” is “good” the “old-fashioned” is simply discarded, bypassed or ignored



# Finance Capital Worldview

## *Implicit theories*

## *Colonial (Financial) Worldview*

### **Community**

The moral community is made up of those who share in capital to undertake investments in industrial capacity and trading ventures

### **System**

The system consists of investors engaged in differential strategies of investment throughout the world. The world as a whole is available as a theater for profitable investment. Financial resources knit the system as a whole together.

### **Authority**

Authority is vested in trans-national and multinational alliances and agreements that work to facilitate the unimpeded movement of capital

### **Change**

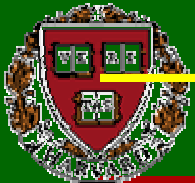
Change occurs through the identification and investment in new ideas.. Change is good and has become essential for competitive survival of rival financial groups. Growth is both good and necessary.

### **Agency**

The investor is the agent of change in the system. The state should act to facilitate and “free up” the potential for the global movement of financial resources.

### **Time**

The focus is upon the next “quarter” or a shortened time horizon determined by a calculation of the annual average rate of profit. Rapid “turnover” of capital is necessary for maximum profit generation. “Time is money.”





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# Worldview in action: Sprawl !

What are its main manifestations?

What drives it?

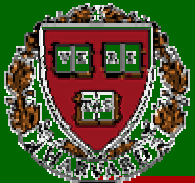
What are its manifest and hidden “environmental costs?”

What are its manifest and hidden social correlates?

Is anyone *in favor* of sprawl?

If not, why does it occur if everyone is against it?

If it is fundamentally a *cultural* problem, what would have to change to overcome sprawl?



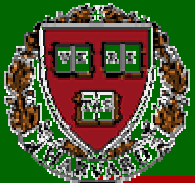
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# “Field Trip”

How does an anthropologist try to answer these ponderous of questions? \*

....when in doubt, take a field trip. Do some first hand participant observation...

(Thanks to Alex MacLean we can get a glimpse of how the “natives” live.)









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## Is sprawl haphazard? Or planned?

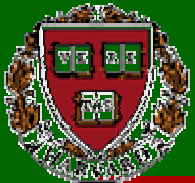
According to one specialist:

*“Urban sprawl is random unplanned growth...”*

(Robert Bullard, 2000)

But is this true?

Does this look “random” or “unplanned?”





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What about this?



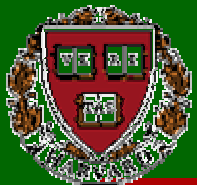




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This may look pretty “random” and “unplanned” at the moment.....





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but it may well be on the way to becoming  
this...



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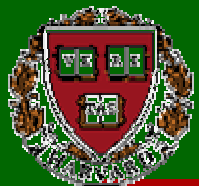




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....and then this.



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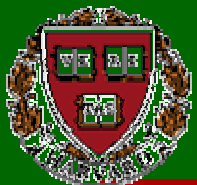




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To future archaeologists, these sweeping monuments, built for the exercise of our cars, may hold the key to understanding the essence of our culture's values. They will certainly be our civilization's most ambitious, expensive, impressive and enduring design and engineering achievements.



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And where do they lead?  
In part, round and round,  
but also....  
from the “core” to the “periphery.”

And what is on the periphery?

This.....



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**Ford Explorer**



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# Is this space in America?



How can you tell?

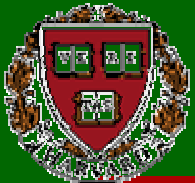
How would people in American culture view this space?

Is it a wetland? A river mouth?

Who or what were its previous inhabitants?

\*  
—

Do they have “rights”?

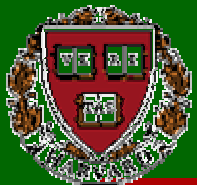




**Dodge Durango**



**Jeep Grand Cherokee**





**GMC Envoy**



**Toyota 4Runner**



**Nissan Pathfinder**



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## Cascading Environmental Implications...

Increased use of cars

needed to do anything

can't buy a loaf of bread without a \$10,000 investment in auto-mobility

==> Increase in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions + ground level ozone + NO<sub>x</sub> + particulates

==> Smog

==> Health hazards



## Cascading Environmental Implications...

==> Increased use of energy in cars + energy in “conditioning” the air in cars and home and offices.

==> Car usage leads to demand for more roads.

==> More roads ==> More traffic + change in surface and groundwater hydrology -- i.e.. water pollution and localized “flooding/drought” cycle.





## Cascading Environmental Implications...

==> Increase in road coverage fuels land-use conversion from forest, farmland, wetland and open space to housing developments.

==> Land-use conversion leads to the expansion of “the crabgrass frontier.”

==> Lawns are drenched in chemicals and fertilizers and this poisons water and soil, resulting in

==>habitat loss and die-off or displacement of species.



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Some people have had enough of this...

Some groups of radical environmentalists have vowed to stop this whole cascading syndrome of ecological degradation.

How?

In part by trying to convince people to “clean up their act.”

In addition, the *Earth Liberation Front (ELF)* resorts to direct action. \* \*



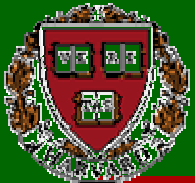
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# “Ecological Crime” and Environmental Justice?

## "Anti-Sprawl Arsons Burn Into Arizona's Conscience"

*Los Angeles Times* (02/11/01) P. A1; Cart, Julie

An anti-sprawl group has set fire to as many as nine homes in the Phoenix, Ariz., area since December 2000. The so-called Coalition to Save the Preserve is a group of unidentified mountain-biking ecoterrorists seeking to raise awareness concerning urban sprawl in the highly sensitive ecosystem. Thus far, the group has targeted only high-end homes on the outskirts of the area, careful to injure no one or cause damage to nearby homes. The series of arsons actually represent the larger debate between Arizona's pro- and anti-growth camps.



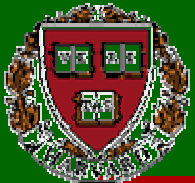
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## What about the social implications of sprawl?

Beyond the question of “ecological crime” involved in the “periphery,” from a broader perspective there are important social equity questions at stake on a regional level.

These underscore the pervasive and systemic relationship between sprawl and environmental justice.

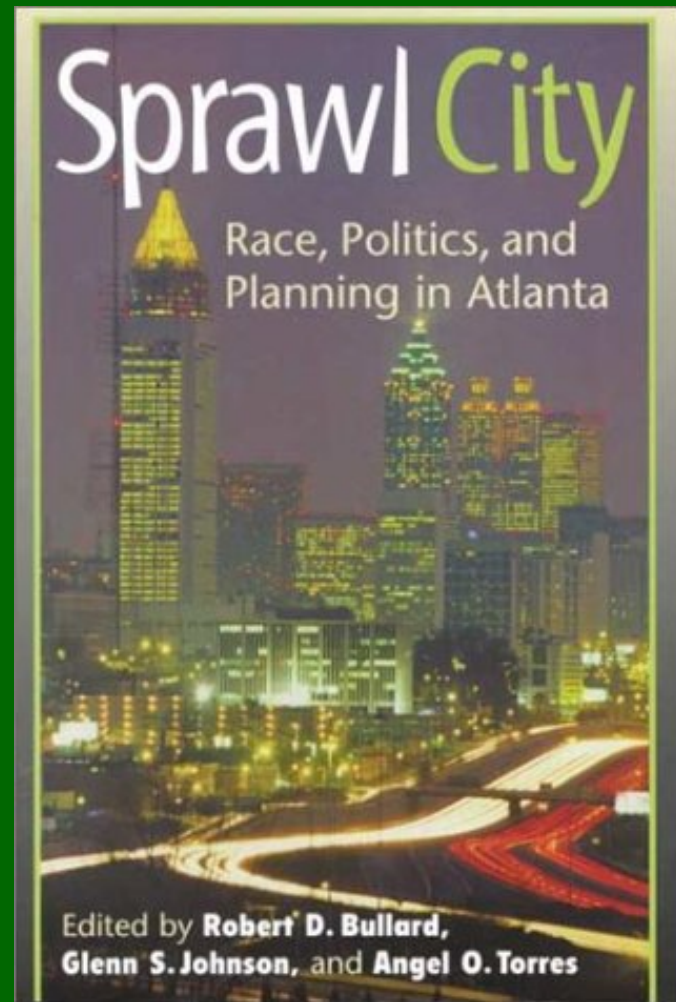
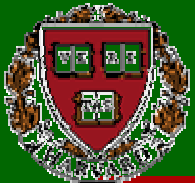
Sprawl is the sum-total manifestation of urban abandonment. It often takes the form of “white flight.”



## Consider Atlanta...

Atlanta has been identified as the “poster-child” of sprawl.

Sierra Club calls it the most sprawl-threatened city in the United States. \* \*



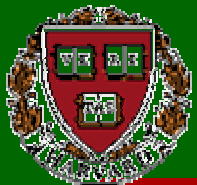
# Environmental Justice and Atlanta Sprawl



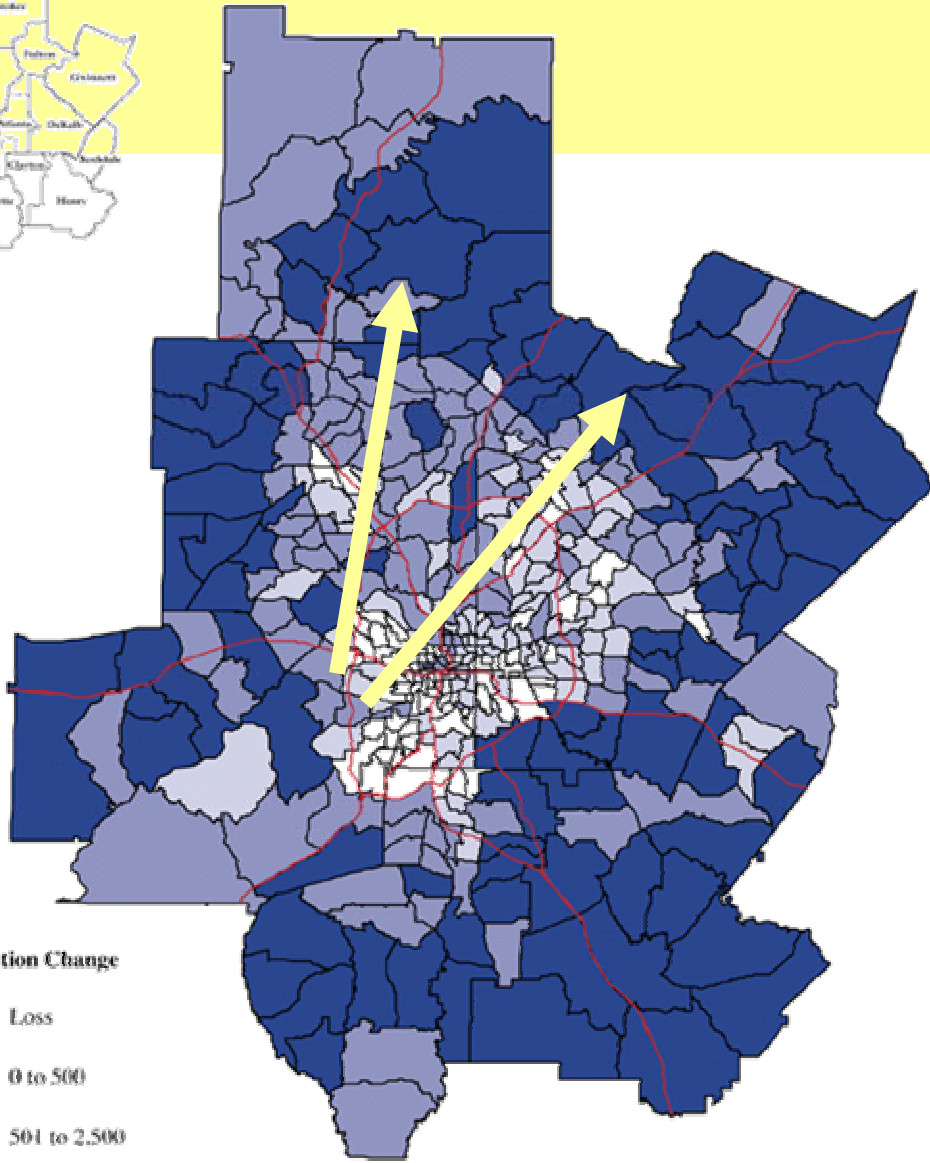
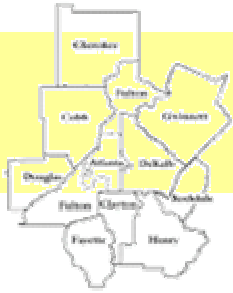
The counties around Atlanta have experienced phenomenal growth.

National urban policy groups have focused on the region and its problems. \*

Even farmers have had their say. \*



# Population Change 1990-2000



Atlanta has experienced “white flight,” as the more affluent leave the “core” and move to the sprawling “periphery.” \*\*



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