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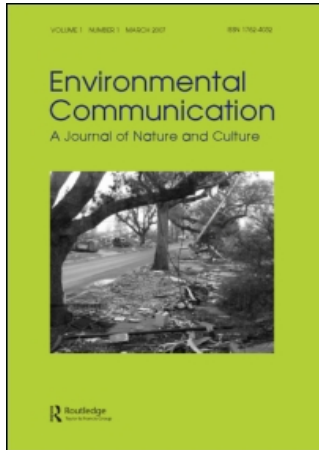
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## RESPONSE TO COX

# Environmental Communication: Why This Crisis Discipline Should Facilitate Environmental Democracy

M. Nils Peterson, Markus J. Peterson & Tarla Rai Peterson

*The authors concur with Cox's claim that environmental communication (EC), like conservation biology, is a crisis discipline. Cox's proposed tenets for EC challenge the scientific norm of objectivity that has guided science for centuries, suggesting that today's environmental crisis requires us to travel a different path. The authors take Cox's essay as provocation to radically challenge magical notions of scientific objectivity. They briefly review Platonic contributions to the myth of scientific objectivity and then advocate a nondualistic perspective toward the relationship between humans and nature. They then suggest how this perspective both expands upon and diverges from Cox's vision of political and ethical engagement among EC scholars.*

*Keywords:* Citizenship; Consensus; Democracy; Land Community; Pragmatism

### Introduction

We concur with Cox's claim that environmental communication (EC), like conservation biology, is a crisis discipline. While the extent of environmental crisis goes far beyond any single species (i.e. humans), we share with many other social scientists and humanists an inclination to focus attention on the serious threat to human existence posed by degradation of natural systems. We also agree that crisis disciplines tend to be open to synthesis and interdisciplinary work, because the

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urgency associated with crisis gives those disciplines both an excuse and a responsibility to break normative boundaries to avert impending disaster. Cox (2007) and Soulé's (1985, 1986, 1987, 1991) functional and normative tenets challenge the scientific norm of objectivity that has guided positivist science for centuries, suggesting that today's environmental crisis requires us to travel a different path.

We wholeheartedly support Cox, and take his essay as provocation to radically challenge magical notions of scientific objectivity that persist for lack of sufficiently compelling alternatives. In this essay, we briefly review Platonic contributions to the myth of scientific objectivity and then advocate an alternative perspective toward the relationship between humans and nature. We then explore how this perspective leads to expansion upon and divergence from Cox's functional and normative tenets for EC.

### **Plato's Cave and Leopold's Community**

As most readers are aware, the myth of objectivity under which we labor in the twenty-first century deeply influenced the Enlightenment writings of men such as Francis Bacon, René Descartes, David Hume, and John Locke, all of whom provide support for reductionist science. These Enlightenment writers were undoubtedly influenced by Plato's allegory of the cave (400 BC: Plato 1944), which pictures human society inside a cave formed by its own delusions. Only philosophers who have freed themselves from social biases (e.g., politics, values, and subjectivity) have the ability to escape the cave and clearly assess truth in nature. Their unique ability to experience truth gives them an ethical responsibility to return to the cave and explain reality to their ignorant compatriots, who will never leave (Latour, 2004). This myth created a rupture between nature and society (Haraway, 1997) that permeates even the most progressive views of science (e.g., Soulé, 1985, 1986), and emerges in the dichotomization between human subjects and nonhuman objects and the dualistic juxtaposition of sociosymbolic and natural worlds (i.e. the National Science Foundation's "Coupled Human-Natural Systems" funding competitions). Within enlightened modernity, scientists take the place of philosophers, and material reality stands in for truth. Because they operate within the "culture of no culture" (Jasinoff, Markle, Petersen, & Pinch, 1995; Latour, 1987; Traweek, 1988, p. 162), scientists inherit the responsibility for interpreting reality so the ignorant masses can make appropriate decisions. This human-nature dualism poses a serious obstacle to conservation generally, and to EC specifically, by excluding extrahumans from the community of decision-makers (Busch, 1996; Latour, 2004; Leopold, 1949; Naess, 1973; 1986; Rogers, 1998).

Because postpositivism emerged from science defined by Plato's allegory of the cave, its proponents frame the debate over rules of science and validity in terms of the human-versus-nature dualism. Rigorous rules and methodologies are constructed to ensure that scientists can travel between society and nature with foundational truths in tow. Ironically, positivist science accepts the cave myth in the face of overwhelming empirical and logical evidence suggesting that complete objectivity is impossible. The field of science and technology studies has convincingly demonstrated that no

amount of self-imposed neutrality or methodological sleight of hand can remove a scientist from her socioculturally defined perceptions and position (Haraway, 1994; Jasinoff, et al., 1995; Kuhn, 1962/1996; Latour & Woolgar, 1979). Accepting Plato's allegory gives scientists the illusion of objectivity, but strips them of political and ethical stewardship.

Constructivism shares positivism's tendency to separate the human and constructed world from the natural and real world, by essentially arguing that scientists never actually leave the cave (Demeritt, 1998). The solipsism of strong constructivist paradigms labels the nonself a construct (Peters, 1999). Constructivist epistemologies not only endanger conservation by denying nonhumans citizenship, they cripple conservation initiatives by suggesting that truth is what the powerful believe (Collins & Pinch, 1993; Demeritt, 1998; Woolgar, 1988). Accepting such paradigms equates to accepting today's dominant powers as truth, thereby contributing to their hegemony (Peterson, Peterson, & Peterson, 2005). Moreover, if ecological problems were only social constructs, changing the terms of societal discourse alone could solve them (Peterson, 1997).

Both EC and conservation biology require a complete escape from this magical worldview that excludes extrahumans from the community of decision-makers. Despite widespread awareness that the human–nature dualism attenuates efforts to avert environmental crisis by trivializing attempts to reconsider the relations between humans and Earth, society remains stuck in post-Enlightenment mode. Rogers (1998) advocates a “transhuman materialist” approach to our dilemma, and lists four criteria for such an approach that could be particularly helpful to EC:

- (1) the resurrection of a place for natural forces, traits, and structures in communication theory while avoiding a return to natural determinism; (2) an affirmation that we humans are embodied creatures embedded in a world that is not entirely our own making; (3) a rehearsal of ways of listening to nondominant voices and extra-human agents and their inclusion in the production of meaning, policy and material conditions; (4) the deconstruction of common sense binaries such as subject/object, social/natural, and ideational/material, and a reconstruction of relationships as dialogic: recursive, interdependent and fluid. (p. 268)

Environmental communication, reconceptualized along the lines suggested by Rogers, no longer is oriented toward concerns about whether humans are unique in their ability to communicate. Such an assertion becomes ludicrous. By debunking the myth of human exceptionalism, Rogers would free us to discover how we can best communicate with extrahuman others.

Admitting the possibility and promise of communication with extrahuman (as well as human) others suggests the importance of an integrated community where that communication can occur. Aldo Leopold (1949) offers a springboard for a more integrated understanding of the relationship between human society and Earth, when he writes:

The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land... In short, a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain

member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members and also respect for the community as such. (p. 204)

Leopold's land community is a society of interdependent human and extrahuman citizens that participate in decision-making and exercise other rights of citizenship. Throughout this essay, we use the term *land community* to indicate the inclusion of aquatic, atmospheric, and terrestrial subjects that work together to form a community. We do not intend this essay as an argument that acting in an ethically responsible fashion will call such a community into being. Rather, we argue that such a community currently exists, and all citizens have ethical responsibilities to promote their communities' sustainability. Community members, of course, experience community at relatively more local than global scales. This scalar dimension includes space, time, and topic. Topically, EC scholars and practitioners are well positioned to fulfill our responsibility to community sustainability by repeatedly increasing the permeability of its boundaries.

This community-based view of EC has philosophically pragmatic roots in constraining reality to what the community may possibly experience. We follow philosophical and linguistic pragmatists (Burke, 1984a; 1984b; James, 1908; Keulartz, Schermer, Korthals & Swierstra, 2004; Parker, 1996) in arguing that all persons know the world through the mediation of experience. Pragmatic knowledge thus succeeds in making sense of the world without contradicting experience. We then suggest expanding this claim to include extrahumans among those subjects who experience their environment. By defining what can be experienced, human and extrahuman actors mutually construct reality. Without the arbitrary boundaries of Plato's cave, nature loses its meaning as contrasted against sociosymbolic reality (Castree & Braun, 1998). A pragmatic approach to EC offers a more productive terministic screen for nature. Terministically, the new nature is distinct from environment in that nature may be part of the community, whereas the environment is outside of the community.

Any effort to deconstruct the human–nature dualism, however, raises several knotty questions: (1) how can the land community address perturbations from its environment, (2) how can extrahumans be social, (3) how can extrahumans act politically, and (4) what ethical responsibilities would EC practitioners have within this land community? We intend our response to Cox's functional and normative tenets to provoke lively conversation about how EC can most usefully insinuate itself into potential answers to these questions.

### Critical Response to Cox's Functional Tenets

Cox's functional tenets represent his (we think quite accurate) perception of EC's generally accepted premises. We understand the first—that “‘environment’ imbricates material and social/symbolic processes” (Cox, 2007, p. 12)—as a way of positioning environment outside the land community. Environmental problems are “mediated by systems of representation” that develop within the land community. The environment represents everything external to that community; it does not

represent the natural (as opposed to socially constructed) world. With the land community nestled inside the environment, EC shifts from a discipline responsible for reinterpreting material reality for those trapped by faulty symbolic mediation to a discipline responsible for expanding what can be experienced.

Our understanding of EC leads us to revise Cox's second tenet (p. 13) to read, "representations of environment embody interested orientations toward others." First, representations are necessarily sociosymbolic. Their symbolicity does not render them immaterial. Second, community members are self and other; not subject and object. Finally, community members do not possess other members. To move beyond the division between speaking social subjects (humans), and silent objects (nonhumans), we must foreground the claim that humans and extrahumans interact by modifying each other's experiences and consequences. Both use spokespersons to communicate (Peters, 1999), and both are social actors (Latour, 2004). Within any political structure, experience is simultaneously real, social, and discursive (Haraway, 1991; Latour, 1993). Since extrahumans are real, in that they experience and are social, their citizenship and subjecthood hinges on their ability to participate in political discourse.

Individual actors and associations of human and extrahuman actors can form the speaking, deciding assemblies (i.e., land communities) of Dewey's (1927) deliberative democracy. As Peters (1999; following Hegel) suggests, the composition of any democratic community must be the object of discourse, and citizens must be capable of participating in the discourse. The discourse we have in mind is not limited, or even centered around, dialogue, which would pose an insurmountable barrier for extrahumans, as well as many humans. Dialogic versions of communication (e.g., Ogden and Richards, 1956, pp. 205, 206) require "use of symbols in such a way that acts of reference occur in a hearer which are similar in all relevant aspects to those which are symbolized by them in the speaker." This vision of communication requires the same magical leap as the myth of the cave. Just as scientists leave society for unbiased communion with nature, individuals step outside themselves for unbiased communion with others.

Peters (1999) advocates replacing the illusion of mind-meld achieved through dialogue with the messy and imprecise vision of communication as dissemination. Although dissemination opens terrifying possibilities of chaotic, impersonal missives zipping across space and time without promise of reciprocity, it also reframes receivers/listeners as actors, rather than as objects to be acted upon (Burke, 1969; Peters, 1999). The idea that EC scholars should study disseminated communiqués points toward hermeneutics, or the interpretation of texts by unintended receivers. Using an internal dialogue of hermeneutics to understand disseminated representations of the environment provides humans and extrahumans a forum for discourse, where subjects broadcast symbols (e.g., words, gestures, behavior) that support multiple interpretations (Peters, 1999).

Extrahumans, however, cannot gain citizenship in political communities without spokespersons in the political process of decision-making. This limitation is not unique to extrahumans. The complexity of the land community makes direct

democracy logistically impossible, and humans in most democratic nations require representation by someone other than themselves. By representation, we refer to spokespersons speaking in lieu of their constituents within a political process (Latour, 2004). EC practitioners become spokespersons for other persons, birds, wolves, fish, trees, mountains, or any other community member in an attempt to promote community sustainability. The charge to represent extrahumans can be informal, as with the social charge for human grandparents to represent their grandchildren (e.g., social deference to the opinions of self-proclaimed scientists). The role as representative also can be legally mandated, as in requirements for legal guardians to immunize their children or federal mandates for the US Fish and Wildlife Service to protect endangered species.

Within a land community that includes both human and extrahuman members, Cox's third functional tenet, that "social, economic and ideological contexts both enable and inhibit the production of representations of environment" (p. 13) becomes almost, but not quite, too ordinary to mention. Without an arbitrary division between human and extrahuman worlds, all members of the land community engage in (multiply enhanced, inhibited, and mediated) productions of representation. For example, social context constrains how bees describe the distance and direction to nectar or pollen sources of flowers through dance (Frisch, 1967, 1976; Seeley, 1995; Wenner & Wells, 1990), and wolves' social context constrains vocalization, pack structure, and other activities that function as representations of the environment (Muntz & Patterson, 2004; Theberge & Falls, 1967).

Cox's fourth functional tenet, "dominant systems of representation of 'environment' influence societal deliberation and/or response to environmental signals, including signs of deterioration of human health, climate, or ecological systems" (p. 14), further highlights the importance of deconstructing the nature-versus-human dualism. Luhmann's social theory (1989; see also Peterson, Peterson & Grant, 2004) describes human society as severely constrained by internal system properties from responding to environmental perturbations. Diamond's (2005) powerful thesis that social communication, more than biological changes, leads to a civilization's resilience (or lack thereof) when confronting environmental decline suggests both the difficulty and the importance of expanding the land community to include extrahumans. Including extrahumans in community enhances society's ability to recognize and respond to environmental signals. For example, Rachel Carson's (1962) successful attempt to give birds a voice in the community contributed directly to society's ability to recognize and respond to the threat of dangerous agricultural chemicals. By addressing the silence of the birds, she permitted an entire conversation about threats to human health (Waddell, 1998). Aldo Leopold's (1949, p. 130) soliloquy on the loss entailed in extinguishing the "fierce green fire" of wildness represented in the eye of the living wolf is no less profound. The community's sustainability rests on awareness that all citizens (both human and extrahuman) share in the loss of wilderness, and, conversely, that all may celebrate its recovery.

### Critical Response to Cox's Normative Commitments

The normative commitments that evolve out of our perspective complement, yet differ in tone from, those suggested by Cox. He suggests that EC should:

1. help society "respond appropriately to environmental signals relevant to the well-being of both human civilization and natural biological systems" (p. 15);
2. facilitate transparency and accessibility of technically oriented information and enable "those affected by threats to environmental quality . . . to participate in decisions affecting their . . . well-being" (p. 15);
3. nurture opportunities for humans to "interact with, and share experiences of the natural world" (p. 16); and
4. "educate, question, critically evaluate . . . representations [that threaten] human communities and the natural world" (p. 16).

Our vision of EC suggests that the discipline can best achieve these normative commitments by continually destabilizing the borders of the land community. Strengthening the paradoxical nature of participatory democracy through rhetorical (both material and symbolic dimensions) struggle is implicit in such destabilization.

#### *Destabilizing Borders*

In order to promote the land community, EC must embrace an ethical responsibility to destabilize its boundaries. Students of EC need not fall into the postmodern trap of abolishing means and ends, thus rendering strategic action impossible (DeLuca, 1999). Rather they should destabilize the distinction between means and ends (Latour, 2004). Means constantly appeal for status as ends, but politicians and scientists require boundaries for means and ends within any political community, and economists externalize anything that fails to fit in either category. The land ethic prescribes what the intrinsic value for nature theorists have been doing under a different rubric, challenging the notion of limiting extrahumans to the role of means to a greater end (e.g., Devall & Sessions, 1985; Naess, 1973, 1986). Land community-based ethics, however, would essentially reverse their predecessors. Rather than preach intrinsic value ethics and hope inclusive communities will follow, we argue the land community already exists. Because it is a living community, its constitution is never final. Because it is always in flux, it would be irrational to demand permanent classification of any entities as means or ends, citizens or noncitizens. Premature closure leaves out too many potential members of the community, and positions too many subjects as objects.

Environmental communication also can encourage appropriate responses to environmental perturbation by taking up the ecofeminist challenge (e.g., Haraway, 1991; Schutten, 2006) to identify and challenge hierarchies implicit in all binary oppositions (e.g., natural/artificial, human/extrahuman, means/ends, empowered/powerless, subject/object). By destabilizing these boundaries, EC may play a critical



role in making the community more adaptable in the face of dynamic environments while championing the powerless (i.e., entities often viewed as means). This political ethic makes it difficult for society to abdicate responsibility for its actions, because right is negotiated by that society rather than distilled from external sources (e.g., mysticism or rationality).

Cox's second commitment, to facilitate participation opportunities through transparency and accessibility, requires EC practitioners to represent nonspeaking or otherwise silenced members of the community. While our call to represent extrahumans in political processes may still seem unusual, virtually every scientific paradigm accepts an ethical charge to represent the subject of research. Conservation biologists, ecologists, and wildlife scientists frequently serve as spokespersons for endangered species, habitats, and ecological processes and functions. For example, Arne Naess, in the Keynote Address at the Second International Conference on Conservation Biology (University of Michigan, May 1985), argued that conservation biologists should speak publicly for all members of the land community. He ended his speech by unambiguously calling members of this crisis discipline to action by pointing out that "Socrates was not popular among the people in power. He pestered them, but in a way that made them respect him. This is all we can hope for as devoted conservationists: to be pests, but *respected* pests" (Naess, 1986, p. 515). In fact, the most influential wildlife scientists of all time spoke for extrahumans, and did so without receiving formal representation authority. Aldo Leopold (1949) spoke for wolves whose extermination would impoverish the land community by the loss of their fierce green fire. Rachael Carson (1962) spoke for birds whose absence would leave the land community eerily silent if we did not do a better job of regulating the use of dangerous chemicals. Dian Fossey (1983) spoke for mountain gorillas whose extermination would impoverish the land community. Jacques-Yves Cousteau (1991) spoke for oceans and their inhabitants, explaining why these members of the land community were so important. Lest we think that extrahumans are unique in exacting this responsibility from EC practitioners, consider disenfranchised humans facing privatization of the public water supply in Bolivia, humans whose entire community will be flooded by the Allain Duhangan hydroelectric project in India (Martin, in press), or the millions of conservation refugees forced out of wildlife preserves (Dowie, 2005). In such cases, disenfranchised humans are in greater need of spokespersons than are many extrahumans (e.g., California condors, pandas, Yellowstone National Park).

Despite the responsibility to speak for extrahumans, EC practitioners need not adopt the ultimate arrogance of assuming that everyone understands social representations of the environment in the same way. Communication theorists have long struggled with the dilemma of intersubjectivity (Peters, 1999) and identity versus division (Burke, 1969, 1984b) that makes complete consubstantiation within our own species impossible. This does not, however, translate into an assumption that we cannot act to form communities. Communication becomes, rather, "a political and historical problem of establishing conditions under which mutual recognition of self-conscious individuals is possible" (Peters, 1999, p. 112). Given

conditions of mutual recognition (including recognition that no two beings will ever achieve full consubstantiation, however perfect their representational skills), Leopold's (1949) famed land ethic seems wholly reasonable: "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" (pp. 224–225).

Cox's third normative commitment follows directly from the aforementioned pragmatic ontology. Since reality is what society can experience, it is important to protect "individual and societal opportunities and capacities to study, interact with, and share experiences of the natural world and to engage others' communication about such experiences" (p. 16). Again, however, we caution against reifying traditionally accepted versions of the natural (as opposed to artificial) world.

### *Embracing Democratic Paradox*

Cox's fourth charge, to "educate, question, critically evaluate . . . [and] recommend practices that . . . enhance the ability of society to respond appropriately to environmental signals" (p. 16), assumes the existence of at least a minimally participative democracy. As he notes, his second charge also requires "the prerequisites of a participatory democracy" (p. 15). For this reason, we find it difficult to separate EC from politics. As with our definition of community, however, we do not intend the term "politics" in a narrow, technical sense. Rather, we are referring to the strategic play between individuals and institutions that characterizes interactions between humans and Earth, including, but not limited to, other humans.

To the degree that a (hopefully permeable) land community is part of an increasing number of liberal democracies around the world, we have expanded opportunities for participation in the formulation and implementation of environmental policy. Within these political contexts, conservation applications become enmeshed in what Mouffe (2000) labels the "democratic paradox." Democracy, which relies on bonds of identification between government and those governed, uses popular sovereignty to maintain and strengthen itself. Ideally, all citizens have equal opportunity to influence decisions. Liberalism, on the other hand, focuses on individual liberties, generally defined as rights. While democracy always carries the threat that the majority will choose to abrogate individual rights, liberalism always carries the threat that the polity will dissolve into anarchy. In tandem, however, they may maintain a check on each other's excesses. Liberalism's focus on the individual offers a powerful corrective to the tyranny of majority rule, while democracy's bonds of identification across diverse parties enable sufficient centralized power to make and act upon decisions. Within liberal democracies, popular sovereignty defines and interprets liberty, while maintenance of liberty legitimizes limitations on popular sovereignty (Peterson et al., 2005; Peterson, Peterson, Peterson, Allison & Gore, 2006).

The universalist–rationalist approach (Habermas, 1996; Rawls, 1993), that has dominated political theory from the last half of the twentieth century, shares with enlightenment science the aim of establishing universal truths independent of context. This approach assumes that every nation will accept liberal democracy once

its citizens become rational. It also constructs democracy as a fragile ornament that must be protected, even curtailed or suspended when chaos threatens, and deferred or delegated until divisive circumstances subside and a political culture made up of reliably informed and rational citizens finally emerges (Ivie, 2004). These attitudes toward democracy have diminished the democratic experience throughout history, and have made democracy something to protect rather than a guide to political action. When public policy is seen as the embodiment of universal truths, it becomes far more important to achieve consensus on those truths than to negotiate a way through incompatible objectives in specific contexts (Peterson, et al., 2005; Peterson, et al., 2006). As Mouffe (2000) contends, the “illusion of consensus and unanimity” is fatal to democracy because a “healthy democratic process” requires the “vibrant clash of political positions and an open conflict of interest” (p. 130).

Although centrist approaches, such as the Washington Consensus in the United States and the Third Way in the European Union, enjoy political success, the consensus-based democracy they represent weakens both liberty and freedom (Mouffe, 2000). Meeting in the middle requires giving up both the quest for equality and the quest for liberty, and can be achieved only by relegating values to an extrapolitical sphere. A value-free politics makes no sense. Diluting the democratic paradox is not only unrealistic, but dangerous (Peterson, et al., 2005; Peterson, et al., 2006). As Ivie (2004) explains, dissonance is needed to invite contestability and to critique the terms that threaten to compromise difference. Accepting all views as equally valid leads to extreme pluralism and anarchy, while creating an artificial consensus leads to authoritarianism and tyranny. To avoid both anarchy and tyranny within the land community, practitioners of EC have a responsibility to represent diverse interests of community members who are less likely to be heard, including, but not limited to, the extrahuman.

An integrated land community enables environmental policy that assumes the need for continual negotiation across time, space, and competing subjectivities (Peterson, Allison, Peterson, Peterson & Lopez, 2004; Peterson, et al., 2005; Peterson, et al., 2006). Environmental communication becomes a system of practices aimed at creating a more inclusive community. This entails generating and debating multiple legitimate answers to the question of how to achieve a just and healthy Earth. Thus, each decision reached through the political process is most profitably understood as a temporary hegemonic configuration of power accompanied by dissent.

### **Environmental Communication as a Platform for Action**

We are arguing for a representation-based political stewardship that recognizes EC scholars and students as both subjective and objective. When a researcher speaks for another person or an extrahuman, the desire for objectivity promotes credibility. When a researcher interacts with coalitions (of people and extrahuman members of the community), subjectivity is unavoidable and becomes a motivating and justificatory factor. This approach admits EC researchers are citizens in the land community, and are engaged in political processes influencing future membership and

structure of that community. After detecting, deciphering, and representing various representations from nonspeaking members of the community, EC researchers/practitioners join the rest of the community in the process of incorporating or rejecting the information. If the community considers the information to be new and important, previously ignored entities from the environment may be incorporated within the community as citizens (Latour, 2004). Citizenship, however, does not guarantee equal or even fair treatment. Some beloved citizens (e.g., pandas, giant sequoias, professional athletes) receive preferential treatment, and less appealing citizens (e.g., mosquitoes, kudzu, terrorists) are hunted, attacked, and exterminated. Thus, enhancing the land community's permeability does not prevent us from acting. Instead, it entails admitting that, since we are forever fated to act on incomplete information, our decisions remain forever tentative and open to reinterpretation.

Our acceptance of Cox's normative tenets for EC comes with the caveat that representing another community member, human or otherwise, is a political, not a revelatory, act that entails an increased focus on hermeneutics. This responsibility comes from our citizenship in the land community. As Peters (1999) writes, "we should care for children, animals, the mad, the deformed, spirits and the dead, aliens and nature not because they potentially have a inner life of reason that can lay claim to our recognition (as Descartes would have it) but because they share our world and our shape" (p. 259). Our institutional imperative is to knit the diverse interpretations of multiple subjects together and represent them in a way that is relevant to every orientation that may be embodied within the land community. Environmental communication practitioners have a responsibility to amplify and translate the voices of nonspeaking human and extrahuman subjects. We should perform those translations only with the understanding that they remain open to retranslation. Those of us who style ourselves as students of EC become permeability makers, as opposed to myth makers. Our job is to poke holes in the community's borders, contributing to a porous and (potentially) broader community that grows increasingly robust and resilient to our efforts.

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