

Actors & Strategies for Change - Towards Global Sustainabilities 2013

Assignment 2 — Working with Sustainability and Strategies for Change

Learning Outcomes

- have an up-to-date, interdisciplinary understanding of the issues of sustainable development;
- give an account of, and be able to evaluate, the strategies, room to maneuver and limitations of different societal actors in striving toward a sustainable society;
- be able to discuss individual/actors perspectives compared to structural/system perspectives on cultural change.



The Scenario: The Keystone Pipeline system is a means of transporting petroleum products from Canada and the Northern United States to oil refineries on the Gulf coast. Certain parts of the pipeline are already under construction, but the controversial Keystone XL Pipeline Project is awaiting President Obama's approval. This pipeline would begin at the oil distribution hub in Hardisty, Alberta and extend 1,897 km, to Steele City, Nebraska and would run over the Ogallala Aquifer in Nebraska. Some of the hot topics of debate are issues concerning, but not limited to, accelerating climate change, energy security, job creation, and environmental and social justice.

A map of the Keystone pipeline network. See a larger Keystone pipeline map [here](#).
U.S. State Dept.

The Actors: The vastness of these debate topics means that a myriad of stakeholders are heavily involved. For simplicity's sake, we will take into account the predominant voices from different corners of the issue: TransCanada (owner of the pipeline project), President Obama, EPA, Bill McKibben (environmentalist and head of 350.org), Canadian government, and indigenous communities in Canada.

Pre-Workshop Instructions:

1: You will be divided into groups and assigned (by lottery) one of the above actors whose role you will adopt during the workshop. Your task is to research your actor's strategy and present an argument either defending or opposing the construction of the pipeline. Try to anticipate the various angles from which your argument may be perceived in terms of sustainable development. Dressing up as your actors is not required but most welcomed.

2: Read the introductory chapter on debating by Robert Trapp. This can be found on the course portal.

3: Remember that this is a role-play exercise, where you are expected to present a proposal that is in line with what you expect the group would be advocating in reality. You might not be sure about what



that 'reality' is. You must therefore search for this information if you are unsure of what your group's strategy would be.

4: Before the class you have summarized at least 5 logical warrants and counter arguments to your assigned actor's stance. This should be based on the Debating text by Trapp.

5: Be prepared as well to call and be called on fallacious arguments. You should have finished "How to Become a Really Good Pain the Ass" by now.

Workshop:

The scenario is that you are participating in a stakeholder mediation exercise facilitated by an objective third party (or fifth party, if you like). The goal of the exercise is for each actor to have their opinions heard and commented upon by all actors involved. Mediation strives to build understanding between stakeholders so that they can both engage in healthy debate as well as work together on an issue. You will have time in the beginning of class to prepare a joint proposal with the other people who were assigned the same actor. Each group will then briefly present their arguments to the class. Other groups will have a chance to respond once all groups have presented.

Post-Workshop Task:

Please hand in the 5 logical warrants and counter arguments you summarized before the workshop. You should revise them if necessary based on the workshop exercise. Were your arguments effective during the exercise? Reflect on why or why not. Do you see these or similar arguments used in any other issue areas of sustainable development? Why / Why not? Finally, did you find this exercise challenging/difficult? This should be 2-3 pages long (1.5 spacing, size 12 font). Refer to the course literature at least twice in your essay (both the course books and literature in studentportalen).