

H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences



Diane Sicotte. *From Workshop to Waste Magnet: Environmental Inequality in the Philadelphia Region.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2016. 256 pp. \$26.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8135-7419-6.

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Published on H-Pennsylvania (June, 2017)

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Long a manufacturing and industrial powerhouse, Philadelphia once called itself the workshop of the world. As Diane Sicotte shows in her important new book, by the second half of the twentieth century the city had also become a waste magnet. While the broader forces shaping this environmental transformation are well known—deindustrialization and the rise of brownfields—Sicotte offers key insights on Greater Philadelphia’s new status as a waste capital. Indeed, the book pictures environmental inequality itself as a multivalent story that impacts a wide range of communities. The result is a richly layered study of hazardous waste and its many discontents in one of America’s signature cities.

Although Sicotte’s book seeks to contribute to the broader literature on environmental justice, it offers perhaps the best and most precise analysis of “environmental burdening” in a major American city (p. 12). Worried that generalization characterizes much work in the burgeoning field of environmental justice, she uses data sets, geo-mapping, and historical narratives of class power, industrial land use, and demographic change to chart Philadelphia’s hazardous waste archipelago. At the heart of her model is a scoring system that quantifies the region’s distribution of environmental ills. A Superfund site on the EPA’s National Priorities List gets twenty-five points while a trash-transfer station gets five points (p. 17). As Sicotte notes, tabulating “hazard” points and places offers only one way to understand environmental burdening (p. 22). Other factors—race/ethnicity, social class, location, and neighborhood history—illuminate the formation of the city’s waste grid, too. By examining these quantitative and qualitative categories together,

she forms what sociologists refer to as a “middle range theory” of environmental inequality—less than a hypothesis but more than generalization—that sees toxic trouble flowing from several intersecting points, especially those of class, ethnicity, and race (p. 22).

Sicotte makes several notable contributions to our understanding of environmental inequality. First, though mindful of the power of race, she emphasizes the “socioeconomic diversity” of Philadelphia’s hazardous waste grid (p. 29). Her data sets map the daunting array of environmental hazards confronting working-class neighborhoods still dealing with “the environmental legacy of centuries-long industrial land use” and abuse (p. 12). In Port Richmond, along the Delaware River, a host of manufacturing plants and refineries once defined Philadelphia’s manufacturing prowess. Already by the 1960s, however, sagging fortunes had undercut the area’s productive power, leading to the “accumulation of abandoned and crumbling factories” [then] fenced off Brownfields and [then] Superfund sites” (p. 9). Part of a series of neighborhoods that are largely (though not exclusively) white and working class (Bridesburg/Kensington/Richmond), Port Richmond faces new rounds of environmental burdening. The area’s many empty lots have become a weigh station for trucks seeking easy access to the nearby interstate highway, thus increasing both noise and air pollution.

By detailing the way that class as well as ethnicity/race frames the distribution of hazards across the city, Sicotte offers “a regionally sensitive theory of environmental inequality” (p. 13). Informed by the Rust Belt the-

ory of toxic trouble, she argues that Philadelphia shares much with Chicago, Buffalo, and Detroit, whose elongated histories of industrialization/deindustrialization touched different communities at different times (though often in the same physical space). Unlike southern locales where environmental inequality was grafted onto racial segregation, northern Rust Belt cities have seen a more dynamic ebb and flow of environmental impacts. In North Philadelphia, Sicotte shows that African Americans confronted environmental hazards only after moving into once-thriving manufacturing areas during the 1960s and 1970s and white flight occurred.

But Philadelphia's story also offers unique twists on the Rust Belt theory. Indeed, Sicotte's second contribution to the field comes in the form of a historical genealogy of the burdens faced by largely African American communities in Greater Philadelphia. As she shows, the region's political and business leaders envisioned waste as an economic engine, often underplaying the enormous new burdens many marginalized neighborhoods would face. In Chester, twenty miles south of Philadelphia, massive incinerators located in largely black neighborhoods foul the air. The burden (ten hazards in all) is made worse because Greater Philadelphia agreed to take a third of New York City's trash—much of which is destined for incinerators in Chester. Gotham's waste comes by barge, train, and truck. Residents complain about "more funk, more odor" "more truck traffic" and more "air pollution," but to no avail (p. 5).

As Sicotte makes clear, Chester's example offers a more recent twist on Philadelphia's evolution as a waste magnet. Dating back to the 1970s, some area leaders saw waste disposal as a means of reversing the ravages of deindustrialization. Supported by African American as

well as white politicians, waste disposal plans first took shape in the nearby city of Camden, New Jersey. Located just across the Delaware River, Camden built a massive regional treatment plant in 1975 that intensified, rather than relieved, environmental burdens. "Sewage sludge [from well beyond Camden] began to pile up around the plant, bringing sickening odors to churches, schools, and homes nearby," Sicotte writes (p. 130). It got worse: black and Latino communities faced other troubles in the form of seventeen environmental hazards. Unable to overcome its status as a waste magnet, Camden is now seen as a poster child of environmental as well as economic trouble. But it wasn't always this way.

Sicotte argues forcefully that economic power, and not just political might, allowed certain Philadelphia communities to hold off waste threats. By controlling landscapes around them, wealthier communities have held waste at bay. Conversely, poor areas like Chester face economic "blackmail": the idea that they are all but threatened to become waste magnets through economic policy proposals (p. 151). Waste has to go somewhere—why not see it as a money-maker for economically disadvantaged communities?

In the end, Sicotte's book offers a model multi-causal analysis of environmental burdening. At one level, she shows that environmental burdens are spread across Philadelphia in ways that might encourage activists, business leaders, and politicians to work together and address common problems. At another level, she challenges scholars to refine their analyses of environmental justice in ways that highlight the intersection of class, ethnicity, and race. It is a timely and rewarding book.

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Citation: Richard Newman. Review of Sicotte, Diane, *From Workshop to Waste Magnet: Environmental Inequality in the Philadelphia Region*. H-Pennsylvania, H-Net Reviews. June, 2017.

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