

I had the opportunity to represent the BCOE and KSU at the European Academy Otzenhausen (EAO) the Global Issues Workshop on Sustainability May 11-19, 2017. The EAO was founded in 1954 in an effort to strengthen Europe as an idea, prevent World War III and make amends for WWII. Located in Saarland, the EAO resides on land contested between Germany and France for hundreds of years. We had the honor of meeting the founders of the Academy during our visit. I applied to the Workshop because the goals and themes align to my research interests in economics education, my undergraduate background in comparative politics (specifically the European Union), and my experience teaching World Area Studies in a public rural middle school in Georgia. Germany, and the EAO, seemed like the perfect setting to explore these interests further and to develop a better understanding of managing sustainability alongside growth in both the economy and population within a liberal democracy- a problem Germany has been dealing with for a long time but what seems to be at odds in the United States.

The Workshop entailed a rigorous and overreaching study of issues in environmental sustainability. Each day was themed around a particular issue such as food, water, energy and education. These topics provided a well-rounded view of the many issues relating to sustainable development and appealed to the diverse group of faculty representing each college at KSU. We took field trips to Birkenfeld, a zero-emissions college campus; Morbach, a solar and wind farm; an organic farm; Bitburger brewery; the medieval city of Freiberg and the Ernst Mach Institute of high-speed dynamics. The EAO campus itself was sustainable and equipped with eco-showers, an arboretum and a geothermal power system. The EAO lives its purpose. This reinforced the idea that political and social peace is not possible without a sustainable, habitable environment that is clean and safe. Moreover, innovation and production in the future will entail a decrease in consumption and definite lifestyle changes.

Each day of the Workshop was themed around a particular issue, such as energy or water. The resounding echo at the end of these sessions was “education.” In other words, in order for the U.S. populace to put solar panels on their homes, install a windmill in their vicinity and agree to higher taxes and lower emissions they must be educated in the reasons and importance of doing so. This seems like a fairly straightforward solution- simply make K-12 teachers tell their students all about these sustainable solutions and climate change and then change will happen! Present students and the public with compelling evidence of the environmental, political and economic reasons for adopting sustainable practices.

This is where K-12 educators and curriculum are of particular importance, but as we learned from Prof. Dr. Lenelis Kruse on the “education” day, knowledge does not directly correlate to economic or lifestyle changes. Simply knowing more, or knowing better does immediately translate into doing better. There must be an infrastructure in place that can facilitate a fundamental change in lifestyle. It cannot just be people’s minds that must be changed, but also their built environment. This was addressed, in part, at the Ernst Mach institute when our hosts discussed “the grid” and the importance of investing in, and building, a system that can support and

sustain disasters, mishaps, and new forms of econ-friendly and sustainable power and water systems.

The other challenge to education is perhaps more insidious. First, there are Climate change deniers like the conservative Heartland Institute undermining efforts to address climate change in schools by sending materials to teachers. The conservative Heritage Foundation informs the Georgia Standards of Excellence, specifically the 6th and 7th grade curriculum on economic and political systems of various countries. On its website, the Heritage Foundation decries the Paris Climate Agreement and claims regulation on carbon emissions undermines the U.S. economy. This is problematic in light of teachers' and students' abilities to think beyond raw GDP and the depletion of natural resources and the burning of fossil fuels when teaching and learning economics and government. What is also troubling is the lack of balance in the standards and the skew to right-wing ideology.

The second challenge is the conflict between reason, evidence and action. Researchers at Michigan State University, conducting studies about reasoning and evidence with youth, are finding that youth can describe the importance of using evidence and can use textual evidence in simulated scenarios, but that this does not carry forward into their everyday experiences and decision-making. That is, they will claim to support particular policies, practices and candidates despite evidence that suggests they shouldn't and that it is not in their best interest to do so. This 'unreason' seems to be part of the human condition. At the EAO Workshop day on water, Dr. Wolfgang Meyer pointed out the irony of Germans and their relationship to water. Germans, who pay a lot in taxes to clean their water and thus have some of the cleanest drinking water in the world, import bottled water and consider tap water bad. I saw this when I visited my friend in Heidelberg, who greeted me with bottled water (to offer a guest tap water would be highly offensive as the German word for 'tap' is 'sewer') and talked about the seeming unreason of buying bottled water at the store and then having to carry those bottles up three flights of stairs to her apartment when perfectly good water comes from the sink. This is, of course, not unique to Germany or to any group of people. Most of us do things everyday despite knowing better and even being able to *do* better. This points to a space outside of knowledge and reason that educators and policy makers must reach in order to make change. There seems to be a thirdspace that is beyond knowledge and infrastructure that we must reach.

One thing that surprised me was that sustainability in Germany seems to be on a largely practical level. Germany does not have the natural resources to sustain the burning of fossil fuels, it does not want to deal with Russia, from whom it gets its uranium for nuclear reactors, it does not want to experience a disaster like Fukushima in Japan, its water is not clean from mass urbanization and industrialization and, moreover, sustainability seems to be cost-effective. In other words, it seems as though Germany is taking these measures because it feels it has to, it is the common-sense thing to do, not necessarily out of a sense of goodness, ideology or even to address climate change. It is a matter of survival that has not yet reached a critical mass in the U.S.

After Otzenhausen, I rode the Deutsche Bahn trains and the FlixBus (similar to Megabus in the U.S.) to explore various sites in Western Germany including Frankfurt, Darmstadt, Mainz, Heidelberg and Trier. I consider this time an extension of the Workshop. These side trips allowed me to speak to people in Germany about what I learned in Otzenhausen, understand their perspective, see the differences in the German regions and see firsthand how infrastructure and ideology function in Germany sustainability policies and in their actualization. For example, I did not see solar panels and wind turbines in Heidelberg, but once I left Heidelberg for Trier, I could see windmills again. In Darmstadt, I was invited to have coffee and cake with two local residents and their friends from the U.K., whom I met on a tour of the Schloss Palace (the ancestral home of the Landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt). At one point in the conversation, they asked me to tell them, again why solar panels, which are made in Texas, are not more prevalent in the U.S. My only explanation was that I would love to have solar panels on my house, and many people that I know feel the same way, but the up-front cost is prohibitive. At the zero emissions campus in Birkenfeld, the solar panel manufacturing industry has all but collapsed within Germany. In Heidelberg I had the pleasure of visiting a fellow scholar in curriculum theory. In addition to spending time with her and her young children, we were able to discuss theory and practice in teacher education and early childhood education from diverse contexts.

Sustainability in my practice.

I teach social studies methods for elementary education majors. One of the major themes of this class, and following the National Council for the Social Studies, is citizenship. In class, I broadly define citizenship as *being in the world with others* and not as a matter of official or legal documentation or status. Each semester, I ask the students in each class to list traits of good citizens. This year, a few students said that good citizens take care of the environment. It is disappointing that only a few students even thought of the environment, however I am doing several lessons this semester regarding sustainability. I have done some of these activities in the past. I am excited to add my new understanding of sustainability to these conversations.

Many of these activities come from Population Connection. These activities ask students to consider the challenges of growing populations on the carrying capacity of the earth. One activity is called "more or less." In the past, this activity has revealed that a growing population means less resources, space, trees and, possibly, freedom. A growing population means more cars, more air pollution and more trash. This leads to discussions about our need to live very differently and our role as teachers in shaping children to do so as well. It leads to discussions on how we change our worldview and our daily lives in response to growing needs and sometimes conflicting values. The activity allows students to project into the future (based on current population-growth statistics) to see the problems (such as trash) we will face in the future and that their students will have to solve.

A second classroom activity has to do with the environment, rights, and the U.S. Constitution. We brainstorm things that the framers of the Constitution would not have thought about and are thus not outlined or specified. Then, I show an article written by John Sutter for CNN about a March 2016 case where youth sued the Obama administration in federal court over the damage done to the environment, the effects of climate change and their tenuous survival on the planet. The verdict? "There simply is no constitutional right to a pollution-free environment," a U.S. Department of Justice attorney said, arguing these matters should be left to the president and Congress" (<http://www.cnn.com/2016/03/09/opinions/sutter-oregon-kids-lawsuit-climate/index.html>).

A third activity relates to oil spills and the Colonial Pipeline that stretches from refineries in Houston to New Jersey. For this activity, students consider the economic and environmental problems related to oil and gasoline shortages. I ask students why gasoline prices and shortages seem to inform our public imagination to the complete marginalization of other issues. For example, after the 2016 Colonial pipeline spill in Alabama, news outlets were focused on assuring the public that gasoline would be available, with scant mention of the actual environmental destruction to water, plants and animals that happened as a result of the spill. In Heidelberg I got to see how my friend, her husband and two children coped with having one vehicle. At one point she asked me, in a tone awe, in learning about my life in Kennesaw, if my husband and I had two cars (we actually have four ☺). Both Germany and the U.S. love cars, but their attitudes towards them are very different.

A third classroom activity asks students to consider all of the resources that go into the manufacture and sale of a Snickers bar. This leads to conversations on resource usage, rights to natural resources, and the ethics of resource allocation. This activity leads to discussions about over-consumption and capitalism. To prepare for the Workshop, I read Naomi Klein's newest book *This Changes Everything*. One of the issues Klein raises is the commodification of sustainability, wherein a new economy has been constructed "in which a tree is not a tree but rather a carbon sink used by people thousands of miles away to appease our consciences and maintain our levels of economic growth" (p.224). In other words, Klein warns of an economy built on an exchange system wherein capitalists make money from appropriating natural resources again. For example, by taking a plot of trees or forest (away from indigenous peoples and the public and barring) and collecting clean air taxes. Klein points out that, instead of forcing polluters to clean up the mess they've made, this system transfers responsibility for payment onto the taxpayer and simultaneously further privatizes and excludes people from land.

All of these lessons relate to a fundamental theme of the course, that of the relationships between citizenship, democracy and freedom. This semester, I have already had the opportunity to begin one of many discussions about the difference between freedom *to* and freedom *from*, which I learned from my trip to Germany. We discussed how Western European democracies are largely built on the idea of freedom *from* (war, hate speech, poverty, hunger, pollution). This is a much more

communal ethic in which the whole is greater than the individual. In contrast, the U.S. capitalism has especially fostered an ethic of freedom *to* (consume as much as I can, get what I want, say what I want, become rich or poor) with anything less being a major impediment to individual rights to life, liberty and property, particularly when facing a diminishing welfare state and austerity cuts in the name of economic growth (at all costs). This points to fundamental differences in worldview. It also points to the benefits of global engagement in helping people like me understand the variety of ways of being in the world and to reevaluate my own living habits and values.

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