ISSA Proceedings 2010 – Argumentation On Sustainability In Small Island Communities

1. Introduction

This essay explores oceanic island locales as rhetorical and material places/spaces and discourses on environmental sustainability. The purpose of this essay is to tease out some of the complexities not only in addressing the concept of sustainability itself, but how discourses and arguments on sustainability, particularly environmental sustainability, are shaped, constrained, constructed, and disseminated as rhetorics of place in the humanities. The first part of the paper reports on my early study on environmental remediation. The second part discusses sustainability as a rhetorical concept. The final part provides an overview of some of the initial field observations that will guide the next phase of research and analysis.

2. Bermuda: Environmental Remediation

My current work on islands and rhetorics of sustainability emerges from an earlier project involving argumentation and environmental remediation (Goggin, 2003). In 1995, the US military base on Bermuda was abruptly and unceremoniously shut down and a growing controversy over environmental clean-up of the former baselands between the US Pentagon and the Bermuda government came to a head. The negotiations between these institutions had evolved – one might also say "devolved" – into a rhetorical stalemate as each side staked out a position on its civic, legal, and environmental responsibilities that rendered effective argumentation towards resolution all but impossible. The U.S. maintained a position of caretaker of the land on the basis that it had made huge investments in American taxpayer money for over 50 years in building and maintaining both a military and civilian airport and the supporting infrastructure of roads, buildings, water reservoirs, and utilities that Bermuda, as a beneficiary, inherited at little cost. For its part, Bermuda refused to accept a position of beneficiary and instead claimed a position of landlord to the property, claiming that as a tenant, the U.S. was under no obligation to improve the leased territory and that it made temporary investments in the baselands for its own military

purposes, not for local residential use, and was therefore liable for existing and future risks to Bermuda's fragile environmental structure and ecosystems.

The case demonstrated the need for deliberative argument between institutional stakeholders on environmental concerns, but more importantly, underscored an important disconnect between the material and rhetorical concerns of small island places, and those of mainstream and mainland perspectives. The study laid a conceptual groundwork for my emerging interest in the rhetorical constructs and discourses of sustainability. In argumentation studies, scholars are increasingly seeking ways to engage with environmental concerns in useable ways to understand and inform public participation and effect change. Collins (2003) notes in her essay on argumentation and media that "scholars investigating environmental campaigns and media coverage note a lack of research into how public attitudes and action with respect to the environment are changed" (p. 207). But she goes on to point to Oravec's (1984) studies on competing value hierarchies in the Hetch-Hetchy controversy, and Cox's (1982) analysis of topical and ontological dimensions of *loci communes* as examples that have "nudged scholarship towards a focus on argument and environmental discourse" (p. 206). To Collin's examples I would add (to name a few) Peterson's (1997) work on environmentalism and public consciousness, DeLoach, Bruner, and Gossett's (2002) analysis of environmental disputes and "attack" discourse, and Senecah's (2004) studies on argumentation strategies in public participation and the formation of environmental public policy decisions.

A challenge for the humanities in general and argumentation in particular and that (American) universities face is to provide the education for a "responsible" global citizenry. That is, as Nussbaum (2010) states more eloquently: "A citizenry with the ability to assess historical evidence, to use and think critically about economic principles, to assess accounts of social justice, to speak a foreign language, to appreciate the complexities of the major world religions" (p. 93). This essay outlines some of rhetoric's role in terms of environmental sustainability as it relates to the concept of "responsible global citizenry." First though, what do we mean what we talk about sustainability, and how and why do we look at it as we do? The section that follows provides a brief sketch of what is clearly a much more complex response to these questions.

3. Environmental Sustainability And Responsible Global Citizenry
The following quotations from Cicero's (1951) *De Natura Deorum* and Glacken's

(1967) *Traces on the Rhodian Shore* remind us that the concept of sustainability exists because of a growing acceptance that human activity has lasting impacts on the earth's ecosystems. Cicero writes:

We enjoy the fruits of the plains and of the mountains, the rivers and the lakes are ours, we sow corn, we plant trees, we fertilize the soil by irrigation, we confine the rivers and straighten or divert their courses. In fine, by means of our hands we essay to create as it were a second world within the world of nature. (Cicero, II, 60)

Glacken oberves:

Only rarely can one look at a landscape modified in some way by man and say with assurance that what one sees embodies and illustrates an attitude toward nature and man's place in it. (Glacken, ix)

Both remarks draw attention to the crucial point that the quality of life for future generations is at stake depending on what we, as societies and civilizations choose to enact now in terms of economic, environmental, and social development. In other words, sustainability is not a concept for preserving, conserving, or reserving the earth and nature for their own sakes, but rather for their continuing benefit to – and sustaining – human society.

However, one key problem for enacting change towards a sustainable future is that on local and national levels, sustainability is defined and enacted in a multitude of ways, often to serve special interests and political expediency. Consequently, charges of "sustainababble" insinuate that the concept of "sustainability" is too diffuse to be meaningful. Thus, while sustainability and sustainable development are certainly laudable ideals, it is also incumbent on people and societies to look critically and skeptically at who is doing the defining and to what ends.

For humanist scholars who typically reside on the fringes, if at all, of actually implementing social and environmental change compared with our colleagues in sciences, architecture, and engineering, carefully examining the competing definitions and uses of sustainability is perhaps where we can make our most immediate and direct contribution. Most of the contemporary work in sustainability being done by our colleagues in agriculture, architecture, earth sciences, and social sciences is powerfully influenced by the work of Aldo Leopold and more indirectly by Rachel Carson. Leopold (1966), a scientist, in the mid 20th

century who influenced a transformation of traditional scientific objectivism to include biocentric ethics and nature mysticism. His concept of "the Land Ethic" tied human morality and ethical or unethical action, such as public policy and scientific authority, to the natural world and established the idea of environmentalism and scientific activism in relation to the environment. Carson (1962), with whom humanists are likely most familiar through her publication of *Silent Spring*, constructed a new awareness of science and nature in the public mind, and established through her apocalyptical vision of science run amok, the idea that we, the public, were ethically and morally responsible for protecting nature from ourselves.

This is not to say that concepts of humanity's relation to nature are by any means new. In Western Civilization we can go back to roots in Aristotle, Thoreau, Native American mythology. The following passage from the *Bible* is often quoted as both an argument for and against dominionist positions on environmental stewardship:
And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. (*Holy Bible*, King James Version, Genesis 1:28)

By contrast, other passages from non-western scriptures present variations and alternatives to environmental epistemology. The following example from Sikh doctrine illustrates this point:
Air is the Guru, Water is the Father, and Earth is the Great Mother of all.
Day and night are the two nurses, in whose lap all the world is at play. (*Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 8)

The *Koran* is full of references to the precious resources of air, water, and land, and warns against wastefulness. Mohammed encourages the planting of trees, decries the destruction of the land, even in war, loves animals, and encourages other to do likewise. Many of these texts are important for situating contemporary study in rhetorical tradition. In one of my own papers on Ursula LeGuin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*, as a parable for sustainability, I draw on Plato's parable of the Cave for comparative analysis (Goggin, 2010).

Still, while the concept of environmentalism – i.e. the direct connection between human civilization and its relationship to the finiteness of nature – has deep roots, the more contemporary iteration of sustainability, particularly in terms of

"development" really is a recent invention. And this is where things get really interesting, because the notion of sustainability involves not only conservation or preservation of the natural environment, but present and future economic development and long-term productivity of ecosystems. It is this idea of "development" that seems to be the source of so much controversy and lends itself to analysis of argumentation.

The generally accepted definition of sustainable development that resulted from the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (United Nations, 1987). Because sustainability emphasizes the future benefits based on resolution and consensus (though not necessarily agreement) in the present, for rhetors (or stakeholders) in a given situation that calls for argumentative discourse to move to such an outcome, deliberative rhetoric has demonstrated particular effectiveness. This is not deliberative rhetoric in the classical sense of exhorting an audience to consensus by persuading them that society will accrue some benefit in the future via taking action as a whole, but rather in the sense of dialogism and non-duality to persuade members of an audience to voice their disparate opinions. Waddell (2000) refers to this model of public participation discourse as a "social constructionist" model that "views risk communication as an interactive exchange of information during which all participants also communicate, appeal to, and engage values, beliefs, and emotions. Through this process, public-policy decisions are socially constructed" (p. 9). On environmental and sustainable development matters, a crucial disconnect to avoid creating in the debate itself is that of discursive polemics that calcify crudely divisive environmental politics – what Killingsworth and Palmer term "Ecospeak." For example, in her contemporary analysis of a case of ecospeak in the proposed Cape Cod wind farm project in Massachusetts, Moekle (2009) illustrates poignantly how environmental discourse on the "public good" breaks down as stakeholders undermine the potential for complementary interests as they argued their cases from binary perspectives.

Consensus, if we can say there is such a thing, lies in persuading stakeholders in a given situation to agree to listen to the opinions of others; the goal is to foster public participation. On matters of environmental sustainability, solutions to future problems based on present actions are addressed through changes in the

basic beliefs that underlie current beliefs, attitudes, and, in particular, behaviors that have brought about the emergence or awareness of those problems.

Drawing on Ajzen and Fishbein, Coppola and Karis (2000) identify four determinants in changing behavior: belief, attitude, intention, and behavior. They state:

A person's behavior is determined by beliefs concerning other's perception of the behavior. By producing sufficient change in these primary beliefs, we can then influence the person's attitude towards performing the behavior. These changes lead to changes in intentions and actual behavior. The first step towards producing behavior change is the identification of a set of primary beliefs relevant to the behavior. Once identified, these beliefs can serve as the basic argument in a persuasive communication. (p. xxi)

To illustrate a case with a more desirable outcome than that of the Cape Wind project, Scialdone-Kimberley and Metzger's (2009) Burkean analysis of the United Nations "Forum on Forests" illustrates how multiple stakeholders, both expert and non-expert, represent sustainability as they construct their identities as agents for forest management. The authors demonstrate the role of deliberative rhetoric in recognizing the discursive boundaries that occur in community building, and how to address them. In another case example, Said (2009) shows how a synchronic process of place-making through deliberative discourse worked to build coalition among various stakeholder interest groups and ultimately to enact policy change to protect the headwaters of the San Antonio River in Texas.

The issue remains though that deliberation on matters of environmental sustainability are extremely complex and embedded in concerns not only of science, commerce, technology, and design, but of peoples' values, cultures, experiences, fears, desires, and place, space, and time. A model of public participation built on a social constructionist interactive exchange provides a frame for a deliberative process of argument that allows stakeholders on national and local levels, expert and non expert, to engage in decision making and public policy.

However, in the Bermuda base-closure case, one of the many complexities that emerges is what happens when the concerns of a small stakeholder with little political, economic, or military capital are placed in a global context for environmental sustainability, where not only do they not have a place at the table, but their very existence in the world politic and on the environmental stage is

barely noticeable, if not invisible, or so constructed as a peripheral entity that even their identity and role as potential stakeholders is considered questionable.

This is a problem that appears to be shared, albeit in very different, situated contexts, to non-mainstream places. In their study, *Rural Literacies*, Donehower, Hogg, and Schell (2007) argue that there is a tendency by the generally urban ideal of mainstream society to view, and thus limit and reduce, rural society through lenses based on commonplace assumptions about small communities, what they term "rurality." Donehower et al. state:

For those who can't imagine life in a town with a population under 10,000 or a career dependant on the vagaries of the weather, rurality can seem such an odd state of being outside that of mainstream urban and suburban America, that it can be understood only in terms of not-urban, not-us, not-me. There is a tendency to see rural people and rural places as "other." (p. 14-15)

A similar notion to rurality can be found in Thompson's (2006) concept of "tropicalization" in *Eye for the Tropics*. The author examines crafted aesthetics by colonial and postcolonial governments in Jamaica and the Bahamas, which she refers to as "tropicalizing images." Thompson makes the case that ultimately the cultures and lifestyles are drastically altered as the populations of these islands buy into the very marketing imposed by such economic interests.

Islands, of course, are not necessarily rural and in the case of autonomous or semi-autonomous island nations they often are extremely compact micro systems, not the same as, but in general combining many of the physical, cultural and socio-economic features of continental cosmopolitan urban, rural, and wilderness life as well as concerns related to development and sustainability associated with those environs. However, islands are particularly environmentally fragile, relatively contained in terms of culture, population, and ecosystem, and are generally not self-sustaining in terms of social and economic infrastructure and therefore subject by necessity to negotiation with powerful external influences in terms of their sustainable futures. Furthermore, island communities/nations are each distinctly unique and residents tend to be especially well informed of these external (as well as internal) influences through various local media (including "grapevine" news systems) and deep local knowledge through their connections to place that is magnified by geographic isolation and self–reliance mingled with often absolute dependence on mainland patronage for their very continued survival.

4. Island-ality And Sustainability

In the next section I sketch out some of my initial observations from the four islands I visited over the past year: Anguilla, Malta, St. Mary's (Isles of Scilly), and Bermuda. I chose the islands I did for this study based on their relatively small land area, variety, population density and diversity, geographical diversity, and dominant language (English). As I was building on prior study in Bermuda, I also decided to limit places to former or current territories of the UK. These factors will allow for more effective consistency for comparative purposes across island political cultures. The concept of rurality, or in this case "island-ality" if you will, offers a robust frame for the study. The question is how this island-ality affects and shapes deliberation on environmental sustainability in these places themselves and how a more thorough understanding of this can perhaps offer some insight into how rhetorics of place can be employed in a richer understanding of global and local participation on conversations on environmental sustainability.

While the following may appear somewhat like a travelogue, that is actually an important thing. As I briefly profile each island I encourage the reader to reflect on their own associations, preconception, and experiences with these and other island places: Consider how even the very names of these places and the mental images of them resonate (or not) with environmental concerns and notions of sustainability. The islands to be featured here are Anguilla, Malta, St. Mary's (Isles of Scilly), and Bermuda. For the latter two islands I offer brief case examples that illustrate the potentials for the study of place-based arguments on environmental sustainability.

*Anguilla***:** Anguilla is a British Overseas Territory. Its land area is about 39 square miles with a resident population of 13,000. Amerindian tribes, sometimes referred to as Arawaks, inhabited the island since about 1600 BCE but were gone by the time the British settled there in 1650 (CE) Anguilla is at the end of the Leeward Islands and there are no nonstop flights into the island from the mainland US. Yet despite this limitation, or perhaps because of this Anguilla has fairly recently begun to build a reputation and economy as an exclusive tourist destination. Indeed it offers a wealth of relatively uncrowded white-sand beaches. Anguilla is quite arid and has few natural resources, poor soil, limited potable water, but this has not seemed to have slowed down runaway development of luxury vacation resorts and, with the accompanying boom economy, home construction for

residents. I found that information about Anguilla's environmental plans were difficult to come by. As one resident I spoke with put it, "Anguilla is not a reading culture." Most Anguillans get their information about local news and issues via the local radio station radio, or by conversing with each other directly in person or by mobile phone or online. The one weekly paper is more of a paid announcement sheet than a newspaper. While there are number of glossy magazine publications and government brochures that feature literature on the environment, most of these seem to be directed towards visitors and presents island sustainability as a promotional tool. In general though, it seems that Anguillans are aware of the potential for overextending use of renewable and non-renewable resources. There is evidence of programs to grow local produce, and phased plans to reduce dependence on fossil fuels through renewable energy sources. Still, on the whole there seems to be little sense of immediacy or concern. Due to a relatively small resident population, Anguilla has not reached a crisis point, so it remains to be seen, whether or not the island will actually go ahead to implement its sustainability plans in the near future. For the present, there seems to be no compelling incentive to slow down development and invest proactively in environmental management. Certainly, from what I could see, and from the residents I spoke with, developers have little to no concern about sustainability. And because the island is 95% privately owned, the government has little influence in this sphere to effectively enforce the regulations it does have. Sand mining of coastal dunes for construction materials, for instance, is a significant environmental problem but enforcement to protect this fragile ecosystem is practically nonexistent. Further, conservation and preservation organizations such as the local National Trust are almost completely government funded, and thus, unlike national trusts in other locales, are very limited in their capacities for oversight. Overall, in Anguilla, one gets a sense that because the island is not overdeveloped yet, there is a kind of resigned optimism–a sense that there's still time. But this attitude also indicates that eventually motivating a public to be aware and willing to change its mindset will be an uphill struggle.

*Malta***:** I decided to visit Malta because of its contrast to the other islands. Malta, a small island republic in the Mediterranean is about 120 sq miles with a population of about 400,000 (not including many tourists mostly from Europe). Malta is an old world island country with strategic importance and has thus been colonized over time, first by the ancient Greeks, Phoenicians, Romans, and French, and most recently, the British. Malta is also massively urbanized. My first

impression on arriving in Malta was how does this island avoid sinking under its own weight of development and construction? Malta has only become "wealthy" in the past 10-15 years due to increasing economic deregulation and privatization and admission to the EU via a push by the Nationalist government. Its subsequent booming economy is based on tourism, and its trade network particularly with other Mediterranean countries. More recently, Malta's economy suffered a downturn due to the weakening Euro and the massive debts the island nation had incurred during its development phase. Like other islands I've visited, Malta has limited a potable water supply and depends heavily on desalinization and depends entirely on imported oil for energy, despite its excellent potential for renewable energy sources such as wind, solar and wave energy. The island is in the process of connecting via undersea cable to Sicily for electricity with the idea of an eventual expanded grid network throughout the EU that will provide its subscribers with cleaner energy from renewable sources. There are a number of local environmental advocacy groups and at least two widely circulated independent English language newspapers that are very strong on the environment. Readership of print news is very high with strong participation by the public in the editorial sections. What the local National Trust, the *Din l-Art Helwa*, expressed to me as their greatest frustration in terms of environmental sustainability is that the current government rode into power with a lot of promises for a policy of cultural preservation and environmental sustainability, but that actual implementation tends to wax and wane depending on the "mood" of government and much of the talk is merely lip service. A national commission for sustainable development was started up about eight years ago and drafted a plan about three years ago, but since then has basically been left to languish. As one resident stated to me "unless there is political will, nothing happens."

*Isles of Scilly***:** The smallest island community I visited is not a separate country or territory like the others. Scilly is a cluster of small islands about 28 miles off Land's End and is actually administered as part of Cornwall, England. The total population is about 2,000 on about six square miles. Three quarters (about 1700) of those live on St Mary's, the largest island at a little over three square miles, and two-thirds of those, a little over a thousand, live in Hugh Town, the only freehold area in the islands. All the rest belongs to the Duchy of Cornwall. The islands have been inhabited since the Stone Age, surviving until recently mostly through subsistence. Due to a warmer climate than the rest of Britain, flower growing provided an industry for the islanders since the late 19th century, but that

has given way to tourism as the main economy since the 1970s.

I spent most of my time in Scilly on St Mary's, and the most striking thing I found was a great deal of emphasis on, and actual implementation of, environmental sustainability projects. This was particularly true of the development and planning offices for the Isles of Scilly Council, the Duchy, and the Wildlife Trust. The Council is in the process of planning major upgrades and developments to the seawall and surrounding area along the main Porthcressa Beach which will be environmentally low impact, reduce flooding in Hugh Town in winter storms, and rejuvenate the area to encourage tourism. The Duchy is installing photovoltaic panels and geothermal units in its tenancies, and the Wildlife Trust is implementing a conservation cattle grazing plan to recover areas overgrown by gorse. All of these stakeholders practice transparency in their plans and projects through reports, minutes of meetings, and architectural proposals via highly accessible and informative websites that stress their own commitments to environmental sustainability and promote public awareness. Additionally, they publish many print texts designed to be informative and educational. Much of the literature consists of glossy, high-end reports and guides produced by the Council of the Isles of Scilly. Many of these are sponsored by the Cornwall County Council and funded through the UK government's Natural England offices. What is a striking contrast between the Scilly literature and much of the literature from the other islands I visited is that while some of it is clearly promotional and directed at visitors, the bulk is directed to residents themselves.

Despite Scilly's progressive approaches to sustainability, there are still problems. Water is drawn from deep bore holes, ground reservoirs, and from a desalinization unit. Unfortunately the latter, which was originally purchased second hand from the US following the first Gulf War is approaching the end of its lifecycle. Household and industrial waste is mostly incinerated, so recycling is strongly encouraged to reduce environmental and economic impacts. All other waste has to be shipped back to the mainland of England. When it comes to energy, Scilly is connected via cable to the national grid so investment in alternative renewable energy projects is not really an option as benefits from such would not go to Scilly but to the national grid. Probably the most pressing problem though is a severe housing shortage for residents which translates into issues of affordability for residents, retention of key workers from off island, the future of the younger generations, the viability of the local schools, and a highly

limited tax base for renewal projects, and thus a tenuous balance for the main tourism industry. Visitors come to Scilly for its unspoiled charm and beauty, but want amenities and services. Scilly needs tourists to survive economically, but too many would further strain available housing, have greater environmental impact, and require development that would threaten the very reason tourists come there in the first place.

One important case issue on environmental deliberation for the island community that has emerged recently is the debate over conservation grazing. The Scilly Wildlife Trust has management authority granted by the Duchy of Cornwall over much of the land area. One of the Trust's key projects has been the introduction of a small herd of cattle and ponies to stem the invasion of gorse on heaths and coastlands, and recover areas that have become overgrown through decades of non-management. In information brochures, newsletters, and reports, the Trust details the environmental significance of its conservation grazing practice through historical records of agriculture and transport, data from wildlife studies on benefits to insect and bird life, and economic studies on the positive impacts to local income through industry (abattoir and dairy) and tourism (increased access to archaeological features and open space). This is all accomplished through sustainable practices. The Trust devotes much of its website, http://www.ios-wildlifetrust.org.uk, to information and questions on its grazing project. In my meetings with the Trust's director and staff, they were very enthusiastic about the progress of their land management approaches. However, some residents of Scilly are opposed to the conservation project for a variety of reasons – muddy footpaths, manure, public areas restricted by electric fencing – and have turned to the Internet to voice concerns and to argue and petition for revisions, if not an end, to the grazing project. The response by some Scilly residents resonates with a broader national backlash against the "craze" for conservation grazing. One unfortunate incident for the Wildlife Trust has been the willful damage to some of its grazing project equipment. Still, most resistance is in the form of online articles and petitions that have been employed to not only recruit support from the residents, but also from seasonal visitors. The Wildlife Trust and Council of the Isles of Scilly have responded by forming the Isles of Scilly Grazing and Access Working Group to bring various stakeholders and petitioners together to deliberate on the issue and to compromise. This case study illustrates how various local concerns, in this case, those that are particular to a small island community, play out through argumentation and deliberation in the

public sphere.

*Bermuda***:** Bermuda has been inhabited since 1609 when a British ship bound for Virginia was wrecked during a storm. About 700 miles off of Cape Hatteras, Bermuda is one of the world's wealthiest per capita economies primarily due to the offshore banking industry and vacation destination, and is very accessible via air travel from the Eastern US. The string of islands comprises 20 square miles with a population about 68,000. I visited Bermuda to connect with stakeholders invested in environmental issues. This included meeting with the president of Greenrock, a local grassroots charity devoted to Bermuda's sustainable development, and the education officer for the Bermuda National Trust, and attending a town hall meeting held by the Department of Energy on prospects for wind energy and ocean wave energy. While all of these stakeholders offered somewhat distinctive positions on environmental sustainability, ranging from social activism and behavioral change, to enforcement of government oversight, to economic gain, one thing they emphasized in common was the need for immediate action. The idea of Bermuda as "canary in the coal mine" for predicting drastic ecological failure was a phrase I frequently heard invoked. An ongoing spate of new building construction – primarily for the offshore reinsurance and banking industries – overcrowding, demand for the American consumptive lifestyle, lack of any local energy resources, dependence on imported oil for electricity (in fact imported everything), the decline of tourism, poor soil quality, over fished seas, and so-on have all contributed to an island with an ecological infrastructure stretched to the breaking point.

When I asked stakeholders if Bermuda's environmental future could even be sustained at this point, most were taken aback by the question. I think the idea that it was maybe already too late was something they had considered, possibly even accepted, yet one would assume that their response would be one of guarded optimism. Basically: "it's not too late if we start right now." And there was one other general theme that was a common factor among these stakeholders – the idea that if Bermuda forged ahead with concerted plans for renewable and sustainable energy resources, and social reform, that the island could serve as a model of sustainability for the world, but with little real sense of how that might actually happen. The notion of an island utopia seems to remain important for the ethos of Bermudians as a validation for the Sisyphean task ahead.

5. Conclusion

At this point I am still gathering data, so it is too early to draw specific conclusions concerning the rhetorical constructions of sustainability, but already I am seeing some interesting things. The Bermuda government, for instance, in its official literature (at least that which I have looked at thus far) casts itself as the concerned steward, yet this perspective is in contrast with testimonies by other stakeholders and by government actions that promote the idea of the environment primarily as a resource to exploit. Lack of transparency further underscores the government's troubled relationship with the public. Meanwhile the National Trust has adopted the role of policy watchdog and cultural preservationist, trying to take back what belongs and restore it. One of their main campaigns is to "buy back Bermuda." The goal is to restore and preserve remnants of open space on the island piece by piece and to ensure that the government follows written policy on development to the letter. For some Bermudians, the Trust is viewed with some skepticism as elitists and obstructionists. Greenrock has cast itself as activists for environmental social conscience, more concerned with sustainability as grassroots movement for behavioral change and less with policy implementation.

However, in a recent case, the local daily newspaper, *The Royal Gazette*, served as a sponsor and catalyst for community activism and community literacy that brought various environmental groups and the public together to bring about environmental policy reform. In "The Co-Construction of a Local Public Environmental Discourse: Letters to the Editor, Bermuda's *Royal Gazette*, and the Southlands Hotel Development Controversy," I co-authored with Elenore Long (Goggin & Long, 2009) we detail the discursive effect of letters to the editor and the way in which the editor of the local newspaper serves as an ecological literacy sponsor for the island. During my field work in Bermuda, a heated controversy over a proposed Government development plan for a luxury hotel on one of the few remaining areas of open space on the island (Southlands) was at its zenith. Much of the public response to the controversy was playing out daily in the discursive space of the newspaper's "Letters to the Editor" columns. The published data I gathered on the controversy, along with interviews I conducted locally with the newspaper's editor, provided a rich opportunity to examine local print media as a conduit for reception, interpretation, and participation in fostering public discussion on environmental concerns. For our purposes, participation posed a particularly provocative site for examining public argumentation and the intersection between sustainability studies and community

literacy. We state:

When it comes to focused and sustained deliberation about the environment – the kind of local public discourse that Jimmie Killingsworth and Jacqueline Palmer argue is needed for "the emergence of a culture with environmentalism at its very core" (265) – public spheres scholars would suggest that participation would mean not simply reading, writing and speaking in a public discourse about the environment that already exists, but rather actively constructing with others a new, alternative discourse. For this alternative discourse to serve as the medium that promotes "people's public use of their reason" (Habermas 27), it can't be (what James Paul Gee would call) one of the big-D discourses of industry, business and government – those who typically get to name the terms of environmental discussions and, therefore, the ends in sight. Rather, it needs to be a more inclusive, accessible hybrid discourse that invites what Iris Young calls "communicative" deliberation (73) – which, by definition is *focused* on specific issues and thoughtfully *sustained* rather than scattered across tangentially related topics, but also "untidy" (Hauser 275) in that it neither subscribes to *a priori* standards of logic nor stipulates the bracketing of reasons from additional commitments, values, and motivations that people bring with them to issues they care about (Benhabib 84; Young 72). (p. 6)

However, as we argue, such dynamic and inventive local public discourse regarding the environment doesn't just happen. It needs institutional support. Thus for this case we draw on Brandt's (2001) notion of "sponsorship," the process by which large-scale economic forces [. . .] set the routes and determine the worldly worth of [. . . a given] literacy" (p. 20). We note:

Accordingly, for an editor of a daily newspaper, sponsoring such participation in environmental discussions would involve striking a balance between maintaining an independent press's autonomy from political interests, while simultaneously serving an advocate (a sponsor) for public knowledge and awareness which may run contrary to that very need for autonomy. (p. 7)

Ultimately, in response to public pressure, the Bermuda Government revised its plans to develop Southlands and, for the time being, the area is no longer under threat of development.

While it may be tempting to talk about how an island can serve as the canary in the coal mine that the rest of the world should pay attention to, and how it could be a model to the rest of the world for environmental sustainability, such talk

would serve to further romanticize islands as rarified concepts rather than the real places where people live their everyday lives. But it would also be myopic to not consider the particular, unique cases that each island place offers as rhetorical and material lens on its future as an ecological micro system. What is clear from my initial research is that one can't talk about island singular but we must talk about islands with an "s" in the plural. Unless we can take local context – social, political, environmental, historical – into account in confronting problems of sustainability, we cannot find strategies for dealing effectively with the myriad, and substantively different, collections of problems. The study of small nation states (islands) along with other discrete geographical locales and societies (urban, rural, suburban, oceanic, desert, mountain, and so forth), offer opportunities to resist overly broad conceptualizations and deliberations of environmental issues and to locate analysis of arguments on sustainability in contexts of place, and also to see deliberations and arguments within larger global networks of contexts and discussions. As sustainability is debated the rhetorics of small places, all places need to be included in the discussion. I conclude with this final thought that lends some practical urgency to continued work in this area especially for small oceanic nation states:

Islands share many problems and needs with certain continental areas and commonly are subsumed in development literature within the broader category of small countries....[But] where on continents the limits are only beginning to be perceived, on some small islands they have already been reached. (Hess, 1990, p. 3)

REFERENCES

Brandt, D. (2001). *Literacy in American Lives*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Carson, R. (1962). *Silent Spring.* Boston: Houghton.

Cicero, M. T. (1951). *De Natura Deorum. Academica*. (H. Rackham, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Collins, C. A. (2003).World Environment Day 2000: Arguing for environmental action. In F. H. van Eemeren, J. A. Blair, C. A. Willard, & A. F. Snoeck Henkemans (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Fifth Conference of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation* (pp. 207-212). Amsterdam: Sic Sat.

Coppola, N. W., & Karis, B. (2000). (Eds.). *Technical Communication, Deliberative Rhetoric, and Environmental Discourse: Connections and Directions*. Stamford, CT: Ablex.

Cox, J. R. (1982). The die is cast: Topical and ontological dimensions of the *locus* of the irreparable. *Quarterly Journal of Speech, 68*, 227-239.

DeLoach, M., M. S. Bruner, & Gossett, J. S. (2002). An analysis of the "tree-hugger" label. In M. Meister & P. M. Japp (Eds.), *Enviropop: Studies in Environmental Rhetoric and Popular Culture* (pp. 95-110). Westport, CT: Praeger.

Donehower, K., Hogg, C., & Schell, E. E. (2007). *Rural Literacies*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Glacken, C. J. (1967). *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century.* Berkley: University of California Press.

Goggin, P. (2010) "Enjoy illusions, lad, and let the rocks be rocks": Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea.* In R. Bullock & M. D. Goggin (Eds.), *The Norton Field Guide to Writing with Readings* (pp. 754-760). New York: W. W. Norton.

Goggin, P. N., & Long, E. (2009) The co-construction of a local public environmental discourse: Letters to the editor, Bermuda's *Royal Gazette*, and the Southlands Hotel development controversy. *Community Literacy Journal 4*(1), 5-30.

Goggin, P. N. (2003). When governments collide: The rhetoric of competing national arguments and public space. In F. H. van Eemeren, J. A. Blair, C. A. Willard, & A. F. Snoeck Henkemans (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Fifth Conference of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation* (pp. 393-396). Amsterdam: Sic Sat.

Hess, A. L. (1990). Overview: Sustainable development and environmental management of small islands. In W. Beller, P. d'Ayala, & P. Hein (Eds.), *Sustainable Development and Environmental Management of Small Islands* (pp. 3-14), Paris: Parthenon.

Killingsworth, M. J., & Palmer, J. S. (1992). *Ecospeak: Rhetoric and Environmental Politics in America*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Leopold, A. (1966). *Sand County Almanac*. New York: Ballentine.

Moekle, K. (2009). The vision or the view: Cape Wind and the rhetoric of sustainable energy. In P. Goggin (Ed.), *Rhetorics, Literacies, and Narratives of Sustainability* (pp. 78-96). New York: Routledge.

Nussbaum, M. C. (2009). *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Oravec, C. (1984). Conservationism vs. preservationism: The public interest in the Hetch-Hetchy controversy. *Quarterly Journal of Speech, 70*, 444-458.

Peterson, T. R. (1997). *Sharing the Earth: The Rhetoric of Sustainable*

Development. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press

Said, S. E. (2009). From oral tradition to legal documents: Words to protect the headwaters of the San Antonio River. In P. Goggin (Ed.), *Rhetorics, Literacies, and Narratives of Sustainability* (pp. 116-131). New York: Routledge.

Scialdone-Kimberley, H. & Metzger, D. (2009). Writing in the third space from the sun: A pentadic analysis of discussion papers written for the 7th session of the UN Forum on Forests (April 16-27, 2007). In P. Goggin (Ed.), *Rhetorics, Literacies, and Narratives of Sustainability* (pp. 39-54). New York: Routledge.

Senecah, S. L. (2004). The process trinity of voice, standing, and influence: The role of practical theory in planning and evaluating the effectiveness of environmental participatory processes. In S. P. DePoe, J. W. Delicath, & M. A. Elsenbeer (Eds.), *Communication and Public Participation in Environmental Decision Making* (pp. 13-33). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib. (n.d.). Retrieved on June 15, 2010, from http://www.srigranth.org/

Thompson, K. A. (2006). *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque.* Durham, NH: Duke University Press.

United Nations (1987). *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future.* Retrieved January 21, 2008, from http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm/

Waddell, C. (2000). Defining sustainable development: A case study in environmental communication. In N. W. Coppola, & B. Karis, (Eds.). *Technical Communication, Deliberative Rhetoric, and Environmental Discourse: Connections and Directions* (pp. 3-19). Stamford, CT: Ablex.