

The role of ecotypes in engagement across differences

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Roadmap

1. the case for engagement across differences
2. explore utility of Ecotypes for engagement
3. my experiences using Ecotypes
4. where do we go from here?





Environmental engagement in troubled times: a manifesto

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Abstract

These are troubled times: our scholarly efforts in environmental studies and sciences seem under assault on all fronts. Yet we argue not just for environmental action, but for greater emphasis on environmental engagement as a foundation for effective action. The etymology of engagement suggests connection, commitment, and communication—a risky yet indispensable ingredient of effective action. We exemplify this approach to environmental engagement in four contexts of increasing scope: within our environmental studies and sciences community, across the college campus, among our fellow Americans, and at the global scale. In all such contexts, engagement is no end-run around conflict; it is political just like any form of action. Yet by engaging, we can be the environmental leadership that is so plainly missing and desperately needed to produce meaningful change.

Keywords Engagement · Activism · Politics · Environmental studies and sciences · Higher education · United States · Globalism

- Article inspired by last year's discussion panel on "Engaging Many Shades of Green in Challenging Times: Debating Pedagogy and Praxis"
- Discomfort for some, excitement for others
- Outlined the need for engagement and the practice at multiple scales

Need for/definition of Engagement



- We want to fight, but we need to include a larger circle, not just those who agree with us fully
- Us vs. them ignores internal diversity as well
- Connection, Commitment, Communication

Four expanding circles

1. ESS community – diverse programs, theories, curricula – we need to model engagement internally
2. College campuses – attacked for being liberal bastions – also are laboratories for productive engagement, preparing students for democratic citizenship
3. Fellow Americans – increasingly polarized, need to find opportunities to re-weave social fabric and solve env problems. Draw from experience with natural resource collaborative groups
4. Global cosmopolitics – wider planetary issues, connection/interdependence are key – can connect with digital tools

Ecotypes can be a tool for engagement

- Understanding structure of ideas, values, beliefs helps create difference and similarity within groups - value of each quite different
- Could be used at all scales, with varying time commitments (thought exercise vs. deep dive)
- Create solutions based on factors (decision-making facilitation with diverse stakeholders)
- Four scales:
 - Classroom – single day, whole unit, whole semester (can it be applied?)
 - Higher Ed - experiences across campus? Courses, events
 - Local community – perhaps like Hunger Banquet, World Climate Simulation?
 - Beyond - can ecotypes facilitate engagement online?

Coming together/growing apart/better understanding

Agreeing population/articulating similarity
(the echo chamber)

Agreeing population/uncovering difference
(practicing with conflict)

Disagreeing population/uncovering
similarity (building bridges)

Disagreeing population/articulating
difference (radical engagement)

One day of Ecotypes



- Class: Environmental Education and Human Behavior
- Completed Assessment, homework reflection
- “spectrum activity” in class, sorting along axis
- Discussion
- Could this be a model for engagement at different scales?

Questions for discussion

What is the value for you of Ecotypes, engagement, finding similarity or difference?

Do you have other ideas for scaling up engagement?

Where do we go from engaging across difference? Solutions? Paradox? Enlightenment?