

## Wynton Stayton: Collins, Political Ecology of Hazard Vulnerability

The Collins article basically dealt with wildfire hazards, specifically in the Arizona White Mountains. Collins speaks to human interaction in the last century, as well as processes of marginalization and facilitation, increasing the wildfire hazards in the area.

His thesis statement is "In this paper, I extend the scope of the political ecology approach to focus on marginalization and its antithesis, facilitation." Collins mentions several times throughout the article that political ecology studies generally reinforce the First/Third World dichotomy and assumes that most of the inhabitants in hazardous First World areas are predominantly wealthy affluent residents. He wants to expand on the popular belief and illustrate that marginalization and facilitation are not so clear cut. I thought that his purpose statement was to the point and rather clear.

Collins utilized a multiple method approach, using qualitative and quantitative component, which helped him to develop an understanding of marginalization and facilitation as influences on differential risk to wildfire in the White Mountains. The quantitative component entailed distribution of 1,050 household surveys; whereas, the qualitative component entailed participant observation, semi-structured household interviews, and historical/archival analysis. Collins used primary and secondary data, as he admits to himself on page 27. The quantitative methods allowed identification of multiple influences on household hazard vulnerability. The qualitative methods yielded a nuanced understanding of lived experiences and contextual processes that influence differential risk. Utilizing the multiple method approach enabled a theoretical examination of marginalization and facilitation in reference to the production of differential risk to wildfire.

In the end, Collins believes that directing our attention to the institutional mechanisms that allow the social elite to externalize risks in their pursuit of environmental gain, at the cost of societal interests and the integrity of ecological systems, facilitation offers a conceptual complement to marginalization and broadens the political ecology frame.

The article was pretty straight forward to me, and convincing. The author lost me a little when he was going through the history and vulnerability, but other than that it was fine.

1. With respect to the knowledge you have in the sciences, would you choose to live in a potentially hazardous location for the beautiful scenery of the location?
2. Collins had several different examples and interpretations of marginalization and facilitation throughout the article. What were your interpretations of marginalization and facilitation?
3. If a resident in a hazardous location took proper mitigations steps to safeguard their home, and thereby preparing for that disaster, do you think they are justified to continue living there?
4. Do you think that the government should allow housing developments in these hazardous locations, such as the White Mountains, without warning the residents of the potential hazard?
5. Collins spoke of social vulnerability. Can being vulnerable due to class or socio-economic status really trump the actual physical hazard?