

Meditation on the Arthur Kill and the Kill Van Kull

A proposal to the NASA's Earth Observation System Program for knowledge transference in an urban setting.

This is a proposal to develop knowledge transference in urban settings using television. A television format will be created that combines remote sensing with ground-based video observations. This format will be useable in any city. The immediate objective is to produce a six-to-eight-minute prototype videotape about the waterways off Staten Island in New York City as a pilot program for policy discussions on public television that makes optimal use of images and data generated by satellites.

Rationale:

The information payload of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Mission to Planet Earth will have to land amid myriad human cultures with highly differentiated forms of local knowledge. Certainly the mission must find hospitable landing sites in urban settings. By the year 2000, an estimated six and a half billion people will be living in cities worldwide. If we are to solve our environmental problems, ways to transfer the data streams produced by EOS into urban policies and practices, must be found. The proposed project offers one solution to this problem of knowledge transference in urban settings by using television.

Long Range Objective:

As a founding member of Environment '90, a coalition of over two hundred and fifty New York City based organizations, Earth Environmental Group is urging the Dinkins' administration to set aside a municipal television channel to monitor the ecologies of New York City. The City Office of Telecommunications is now in the process of determining how to allocate five city-wide cable channels. The New York City Department of Sanitation and the Department of Parks and Recreation are actively supporting this proposal, as are many national and local organizations. Starting in 1998, the coalition anticipates that one of the principal sources of data and information for this television channel will come from the EOS project. Successful integration of a municipal environmental television channel with EOS would constitute a local/global model worthy of implementation around the planet.

Mid-Range Objective:

The mid-range objective of this effort is to configure installations for urban public spaces that combine ground-based video observations with satellite imagery. Future proposals by Earth Environmental Group to the Environmental Research Institute of Michigan (ERIM) could further this objective by experimentation in New York City. New York has a host of concerned institutions with public spaces in which satellite images and video could be combined in informative displays. Places such as The Museum of Natural History, the New York Hall of Sciences, the Cathedral of St, John the Divine and the rebuilt World Trade Center could become forums for displaying satellite information.

The television format developed in this proposal could be used to produce videotapes of a number of environmentally sensitive sites in the city. These

tapes could then be displayed as multichannel video installations in combination with large scale, enlarged images of the city provided by satellite. Text for these displays would be drawn from EOS research findings.

Immediate Objective:

The immediate objective is to produce a pilot video that combines ground-based video observations with satellite images. The satellite images will provide both context and specific information about the ecologies of New York City. A format will be codified that works both for public television presentation and policy discussion groups. Along with this six-to-eight-minute video, both a users discussion guide and a producer's manual will be published. The producers manual will be for videographers who want to make tapes using a similar format.

Proposed Site to be Interpreted:

During 1990, over one million gallons of oil have been spilled into the Kill Van Kull and the Arthur Kill waterways in New York City. A local oil transport company has been shut down by the courts. The public is on alert. Yet most people have no image of the waterway in their mind and no regional, ecological context in which to interpret the headlines and the fleeting six o'clock news images. This project will make optimal use of remote sensing images, ground based video observations and relevant data to produce a coherent environmental interpretation of the damaged waterways.

Distributing the Video:

A six-to-eight-minute video will be produced for showing over local television channels with copies provided to relevant government agencies and non-

government agencies to help facilitate their work. Local television channels include WNYC, WNYE, and community access cable channels. These channels will be encouraged to use the video as a lead-in to televised discussions supported by the users guide. Government agencies to receive the video include the Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Coast Guard. Non-government agencies include the Coalition for the Bight, the National Audubon Society and other members of Environment '90.