

# Environment, Technology and Society

NEWSLETTER of the SECTION on ENVIRONMENT, TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY of the AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Fall 2015

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## Committing Environmental Sociology in Public

by Kenneth Gould

City University of New York - Brooklyn College

Colleagues,

Thank you for electing me Chair of our section. I've been a section member for over 25 years, and it was terrific to see in Chicago that the average age of our section appears to be declining rather than increasing (with all due respect to my contemporaries and elders in the section, all of whom are aging flawlessly). I hope that we can use this academic year to facilitate greater intellectual exchange among our section members, and to cultivate pathways to interject our sociological insights into popular and policy discussions of pressing environmental issues

As you well know, we find ourselves doing critical work at a critical moment in history. There's little doubt that we are experiencing anthropogenic planetary ecological collapse. Our natural science colleagues document the indicators of this catastrophe daily. I believe that we, as environmental sociologists, are uniquely situated to offer crucial analytical insights that could and should guide public policy choices, institutional change, and structural transformations in response to the global ecological crisis. Our analyses could make a difference in repairing the broken feedback loop between ecological systems and social systems. But in order for our work to have a significant impact on social system-ecosystem dynamics, our analyses have to be intellectu-

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## Committing Environmental Sociology in Public (cont.)

ally accessible to wider publics, and they have to be inserted into popular and policy dialogues addressing environmental concerns. This then adds two key aspects to our task beyond generating knowledge. First, we have to translate our academic work into language that at least educated lay people and policy makers can understand and incorporate. Second, we have to interject those translations into the popular media discourse at all levels.

To that end, we need to be making our analyses and ourselves accessible and relevant to the popular media on all fronts. We should be routinely writing op-ed pieces for local and national periodicals, using blogs, twitter, YouTube, and other social media, making ourselves available as public speakers for non-academic audiences, reaching out to television, radio and internet news outlets, and making ourselves and our work known to our elected representatives. In short, if we want to make a difference at this critical juncture, we need to be engaged in an organized and deliberate campaign of public sociology. Let us put our heads together and our shoulders to the wheel to develop a plan, or at least a list of action items, to “sociologize” the debate on the future of global development. In the words of Canada’s Prime Minister Harper, let us “commit sociology”, and let’s do so publicly, visibly, and ways that can help to shape social responses to ecological crises.

A number of us have valuable experience with this kind of public outreach that I hope they will share with the section, including Bob Brulle, Timmons Roberts, Kari Norgaard and others. One of the difficulties we face is that news media and policy makers don’t immediately think of environmental problems as sociological, and their impulse is to turn to natural scientists as experts. Part of our task then is to educate the gatekeepers as to what environmental sociology is, and why environmental sociologists are good sources for expert insights. Perhaps we can use the anticipated swirl of reportage around COP21 as a catalyst for our initial efforts.

Thanks,  
Kenneth A. Gould, Ph.D.

Director, Urban Sustainability Program,  
and Professor of Sociology  
Brooklyn College-CUNY  
Professor of Sociology,  
and Earth and Environmental Sciences  
CUNY Graduate Center

Chair, American Sociological Association  
Section on Environment & Technology.

## Let’s Put Animals in the Environment and ETS Members in the Section on Animals and Society

*by Richard York*  
University of Oregon

When I was in the third grade, for a school assignment I constructed a Jurassic diorama out of a shoebox, with a brontosaurus I had sculpted out of clay as the star. I don’t remember what vegetation I put in there (I imagine palm trees and ferns) or what scene was in the background (perhaps a volcano?) or whether there were some rocks and whatnot scattered around. But I do remember the brontosaurus. I’m sure my creation wasn’t very good, since my artistic abilities have never been praiseworthy, but I was more than a little pleased with it at the time.

On reflection, I draw two lessons out of this experience (in addition to the one that my talents probably do not lie in the realm of sculpture). First, the structure of a natural history diorama makes clear that animals need to be understood as situated in environments, and, conversely, environments contain animals. This leads me to think that animals should be recognized as part of the domain of environmental sociology, and considerations of the environment and ecological context should be part of animal studies. Second, I recognize my implicit animal-centrism in that the dinosaur made an impression on me, and everything else in the Jurassic environment I constructed has faded from my memory. So, although here I’m arguing to you that we environmental sociologists should take animals more seriously in our research, I don’t wish to suggest that we should neglect or devalue our humble relatives among the plants and fungi, nor among the vast number of other forms of life in all their single-cellular glory. If the field of Prokaryota and Society ever emerges, I don’t want its members to point to me as yet another example of the narrow-minded Eukaryotic-centric scholar who populates the social sciences! Nonetheless, one of the reasons I’m writing this is to suggest that nonhuman animals deserve more attention in our research.

My other main reason for writing this piece is institutional. I think it would be good – for scholarship, for institutional status, for professional opportunities, for community building, and for expanding opportunities to find drinking buddies at ASA meetings – to create more connections between the Environment and Technology Section and the Section on Animals and Society. In particular, I want to encourage more environmental sociologists to join A&S. The two sections have much in common. A&S and ETS share the objective of getting other sociologists to broaden their horizons and recognize

that human societies are part of a larger world that includes an extraordinary variety of nonhumans. A&S is a small section that struggles to build membership, as ETS has done throughout much of its history. I don't wish to push for growth for the sake of growth, but as you know, membership counts dictate things like how many sessions a section gets at meetings and are connected with the opportunities scholars get to share their work and make connections with other scholars.

We environmental sociologists know what it's like to be on the periphery of the larger discipline (although we've gotten a lot closer to the center in recent years!) and our section has often worked with other modestly sized sections, such as the Marxist and PEWS sections, to build connections and bolster each other's section memberships. I hope we can extend this sort of mutual aid to our fellow animals in Animals and Society. As many of you will recall, we had a wonderful shared reception with Animals and Society in New York a couple of years ago, and we already have a fair number of overlapping members. But in light of the overlap in intellectual and ethical concerns of many members of the two sections, our overlap in membership is still modest. There's a lot of potential for environmental sociologists to learn from and teach A&S scholars.

So, please, when you renew your ASA membership this coming year, or even before then, consider joining Animals & Society, and also come to their sessions and reception at the next ASA meeting. I plan on being there, and I'll buy a drink for anyone who catches me at an appropriate time and place and who tells me they joined Animals and Society because they read this piece. As an additional incentive, if you're one of these new members I will gladly show you pictures of and regale you with stories about my canine family members, past and present (but, if you prefer, I'll just shut up and let you drink).

**The Nature Experiment:  
Connecting Student's Lived Experiences with Nature  
to Larger Sociological Issues of Planetary Sustainability**

*By Lisa Conley*  
Eastern Kentucky University

"The Nature Experiment explores the connection between humans, the natural world, and our reliance upon technology. The idea for this experiment was sparked by our reading of the Richard Louv book, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*. The book explores society's disconnection from the natural world and the things children and families collectively lose as a result. The

experiment gave students a creative outlet for connecting their lived experiences to the sociological and structural issues discussed through the book. Students have shared their reflections regarding four topics:

- 1) Their past and current experiences with nature,
- 2) Their current reliance upon technology,
- 3) Their knowledge of where their food comes from,
- 4) Their predictions for humans and natural environment in the future. Through sharing these stories we hope you will reflect upon how these issues impact your own lives and those of your family and future generations."



In the Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 semesters, I had the opportunity to teach the course Sociology and the Family at the University of Kentucky. One of the books I selected for required reading was Richard Louv's *Last Child in the Woods* (2008). With the environmental challenges facing our society, it is increasingly obvious that we must consider the relationships people have with our natural environment in order to address the issues facing human civilization. For our purposes, we defined "nature" to be anything that is not man-made, including but not limited to, outdoor spaces and wildlife. These bits of nature could be as expansive as a national forest or as seemingly small as a corner park in a large city.

The Nature Experiment sought to connect larger social issues with the student's personal lived experiences. The project consisted of four sections, each addressing a different aspect mentioned in *Last Child in the Woods*. Students were to reflect on a journal-type prompt and include an artistic component like a photo, a poem, or a short story. One student, rising above and beyond, composed a song for the assignment. Recognizing the interdependence between technology and nature, students would then compile their reflections into a digital booklet or a real, hand-bound booklet. All would be shared, with their permission, on a website provided by the UK College of Arts and Sciences so they could, again, blend both nature and technology.

The larger questions this project sought to address were those we discussed in class before, during, and after the experiment. What will the relationship to the natural world be like for children of

the present and the future? Having an abstract understanding of environmental issues is important, but what use is it if those charged with deciding our future policies have little real experience with our earth's natural systems? How can future societies protect the natural world from our destructive human tendencies if they do not love it and know it?

Louv's book explained everything I was seeing daily, or rather not seeing. On campus, I have watched over the years as students who used to gather in the halls before class have stopped talking to one another. Instead, nearly every single student now stands, head bent, staring at their smartphones or tablets. I observed students leave our classroom, pull out their phones and walk across campus—only looking up long enough to not run into others. Some even have near-misses with cars as they cross the street, so wrapped up are they in their gadgets. My teaching experiences were making me wonder, have younger generations always been like this? We, after all, did have Walkmans and then iPods before the smartphone revolution. Had these students had a similar childhood to mine—immersed in some “natural” space to counterbalance their adulthood techno-immersion? Were things just changing faster than I was ready for? Had I simply grown older and more judgmental toward younger generations as the cliché goes?

What I found out through The Nature Experiment is that every student, even those whose past experience of the natural world entailed only sporadic walks in a city park, wanted to have a closer relationship with nature. They were all appalled at how much time they spent online or staring at a screen of some sort. Some of them blamed our class assignments for making them rely upon computers and the Internet, and rightfully so. Many of them included a screen shot of their typical work set up while writing a paper. At the top of their screens, multiple windows were opened and distractions called to them from sites like Facebook, Twitter, ESPN, and Instagram. They all remarked, however, upon how peaceful or centered they felt after being outdoors or taking a short walk to get some fresh air.

I, like everyone I know, increasingly use my laptop, smartphone, and other gadgets daily—often to the exclusion of people and interaction with the natural world. I actively try to not be so dependent upon them, and I am not the only one as I hear friends setting “no gadgets past 6 pm” rules in their homes. The youngest people in our society are being introduced to technology at a much earlier age than my generation. A child during the 1980s and 1990s, I grew up in a world without the Internet and I played outside a lot more because of that, in spite of Nintendo and other gaming systems. Curious to see

how technology might be impacting my student's relationship with the natural world, I had the students reflect upon one day's worth of technology use—including cell, computer, and TV. This reflection hit home hardest for students. One student provided a screenshot of her typical work night and discussed how multitasking distracted her from doing her homework and going outdoors more. She realized how much time she wasted daily as Netflix, Pinterest, and Instagram took up considerably more time than she had expected. She later reflected on the importance of children being connected to the natural world and not relying solely upon online experiences, “Out in nature there are no rules but freedom to try and either succeed or fail. The outdoors allows children to develop a sense of self and their surroundings in reality rather than fantasy.”

The photo below was taken before our class. Students said they often use their phones to avoid talking to each other. When I asked why they would do this, one male student said he is shy and doesn't know what to say to others, so he prefers to hide behind his headphones. Another student reflected, “I was sad to find out that I sent over 68 text messages and received around 73. I search Pinterest for a solid two hours finding ideas for a new haircut and checked my Instagram 22 times! Sadly, I was able to see that my phone is pretty much glued to my hand during the day.”

Despite readily admitting their own disconnection from the natural world, students who participated in The Nature Experiment all agreed that increasing future generations interactions and



appreciation for the natural world would be a positive thing. Every single student said that being disconnected from nature was a bad thing; not one student thought it was a non-issue. Many of the students said The Nature Experiment changed the ways they view the world and their roles in it. Several committed to making more time for hiking, camping, or just relaxing outdoors. They promised to ingrain a love of nature into their future children and discussed how they would do so with games, activities, and books.

As a teacher, watching my students participate in The Nature Experiment was extremely

fulfilling. Finally, here was a project that nearly every student was excited to complete. The detail some put into their hand-bound paper journals was surprising in their heartfelt sentiments. It was as if the students were waiting for an assignment they could pour their personal experiences into and let their creativity flow. In the years that have passed, I have crossed paths with a couple students who were part of The Nature Experiment and they remind me how much they enjoyed the project; how much it made them reassess their lives. The assignment might not have definitively answered the questions about our society's ability to address environmental concerns, but it did spark a connection between the student's lived experiences and larger social issues. Something, for which I like to think C. Wright Mills might approve.

### **Project Guidelines & Prompts:**

**Topic 1- You and Nature—Fully address, in no less than 300 words, your past and present experiences with nature and the outdoors.**

- What do you consider “nature?” How did you and your family engage in the natural world while you were a child? What did you do most often? How did it shape you as a person?
- What are your current experiences with nature? How often do you find yourself in the outdoors for enjoyment or relaxation?
- Include old or new photos, images from the Internet of your favorite spot, a sketch, a poem or other creative writing.

**Topic 2- A Snapshot of Technology Use—Fully address, in no less than 300 words, your reliance on technology today.**

- Reflect upon your use of technology by keeping track of how many times in one day you logged on to any online account, sent a text, chatted on the phone, or spent time gaming. Include the time you spent researching for school or using a computer for school.
- Do you think your usage was too much, too little, or just right?
- Do you notice any shifts in your mood on days when you're “plugged in” more?
- Do you notice shifts in your mood on days you are outside and “unplugged” more?
- Include old or new photos, images from the Internet of your favorite gadget or a snapshot of your blog/Facebook page/Twitter account, a sketch, a poem or other creative writing.

**Topic 3- Disconnections—Fully address, in no less than 300 words, what you know about the food you eat.**

- List three food items you ate today that you commonly eat and reflect upon where that food comes from. Is it from KY? Is it from another country? Is it organically produced or genetically modified? Who are the farmers? Who picks the fruit or vegetable?
- Do you know how to grow basic vegetables like green beans, potatoes, tomatoes, or kale? If not, explain why?
- Have you ever grown vegetables, herbs, or flowers? If not, explain why?
- Has anyone in your family ever produced food in a garden?
- Include old or new photos, images from the Internet of your favorite food product, a sketch, a poem or other creative writing.

**Topic 4- The Future and You—Fully address, in no less than 300 words, what your plans to incorporate more nature into your life or that of your future children. If you do not plan to do so or to have children, explain why you do not think increased exposure to the natural world is necessary.**

- Do you think increasing your exposure to the natural world would be a good thing? Why or why not?
- What are your predictions for the future of the natural world and human's interactions in it?
- If you plan to have children, why do you think it is necessary, or not, to expose them to the outdoors and nature?
- Imagine you are a teacher, parent, or babysitter. Construct a quick activity a child of 7-10 years old could do that would get them outdoors and help them appreciate nature more.
- Include old or new photos, images from the Internet, a sketch of the activity, a poem or other creative writing.

### **Student Work**

A few students chose to make paperback books instead of online journals.

[One student-musician wrote a song for his creative component.](#)

Another student wrote a poem about his love-hate relationship with technology:

## My High Tech Prison

Four walls and LCD screens  
Facebook statuses and Twitter feeds  
OH MY GOD! My eyes will bleed unless I am looking  
at 1080p  
Technology is everywhere! It surrounds me!  
Which Facebook status should I like?  
HOLY CRAP! When was the last time I took a hike?  
Breathed fresh air? And when green was all that  
surrounded me?  
Ages ago I guess  
I can't remember I must confess  
With technology I expect more while I do less  
I have created a High-Tech Prison formed out of this  
technological mess

*Lisa Conley is a member of the Teaching and Outreach Committee of ETS. she earned her Ph.D. in Sociology from University of Kentucky in December 2014. She attended Eastern Kentucky University for her BA in Sociology (2003) and her Masters in Criminal Justice (2005). Lisa has taught at Eastern Kentucky University in the Departments of Criminal Justice, Sociology, and Women and Gender Studies and in the Department of Sociology at the University of Kentucky. She is now the Director of Eastern Kentucky University's Safety City in Lexington, KY.*

*The Teaching and Outreach Committee is still seeking examples of action-oriented environmental sociology projects. Please contact Shannon Bell [shannon.eliz.bell@uky.edu](mailto:shannon.eliz.bell@uky.edu) to contribute yours.*

Project description from our website:  
<http://www.as.uky.edu/nature-experiment>

## Conferences and Calls for Papers



### **Transformative Global Climate Governance "après Paris"**

2016 Berlin Conference on Global Environmental  
Change Berlin, 23-24 May 2016

[www.berlinconference.org/2016](http://www.berlinconference.org/2016)

The German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE) and the Environmental Policy Research Centre (FFU), Freie Universität Berlin, invite proposals for papers for the 2016 Berlin Conference on Global Environmental Change: Transformative Global Climate Governance "après Paris".

In December 2015, governments convene in Paris to deliver a new global agreement on international climate policy. Expectations vary from outright skepticism to ambitious optimism: While providing a basis to limit global warming to a maximum of 2°C remains a long shot, a reenactment of the 2009 Copenhagen Climate Summit, which has been widely perceived as a failure, seems also unlikely. In any case, Paris will mark a watershed in international climate politics. The prospective Paris Agreement is likely to entail a reconfiguration of the institutional landscape of global climate governance and substantive new priorities.

### **Conference Themes**

As pertinent questions revolving around global climate governance are here to stay, this conference invites scholars and practitioners to refocus their quest for answers in the light of the continuity and change that Paris will bring. It also aims to discuss international climate policy and, indeed, politics in the larger context of global governance and the challenges of a transformation towards sustainable development in a turbulent world. In the course of two days, participants will have the opportunity to put the Paris outcomes in perspective with a view to five overarching and interrelated themes:

1. Transformation: pursuit of strategies to realize sustainable development globally, by going beyond "greening" business as usual and by a corresponding redistribution of relevant resources;
2. Global Justice: provision of fairness and equity across temporal and spatial dimensions, particularly regarding greenhouse gas emissions, natural resources and finance;
3. Coherence: understanding and managing trade-offs between climate policy, sustainable development, economic policies, transformative dynamics and the accompanying institutional complexities;
4. Multilevel Capacity: harnessing global, transnational, regional, national and subnational capacities and contributions to avoid unmanageable global warming (i.e. mitigation) as well as responses to unavoidable climate change impacts (i.e. adaptation; loss & damage).
5. Framing: identifying risks and opportunities for linking

frameworks, discourses and institutions of climate governance with other global issues such as security, migration, trade, food security or land use.

The conference provides a space for the timely discussion of interdisciplinary transformation research that builds on institutionalist scholarship, social and cultural sciences, policy analysis, political philosophy as well as political economy approaches to climate governance. It seeks to facilitate exchange and to enhance transformative literacy.

Climate governance sits at the very center of wider and primarily normative debates about a global transformation towards sustainability. As there is no "one size fits all" blueprint for transformative governance, different options for strategic planning and innovation, changing technological pathways and social behavior, ensuring reflexivity, organizing participation, etc. need to be identified and explored, employing different disciplinary as well as regional perspectives. Empirically, we expect transformative climate governance to provide the middle ground for "top-down" centralized strategic and long term planning and a multitude of "bottom up" initiatives that further decentralized and competitive incrementalism.

The outcomes of the Paris Climate Change Conference will provide fresh momentum to global climate governance, one way or the other. Interpreting the details of a prospective Paris Agreement, its further development and its implementation will require commensurate transformation research. So will the development of effective and just governance mechanisms beyond the UN climate regime. While the scope and objectives of a climate-smart and just transformation may seem straightforward, transformative pathways will inevitably be diverse, complex and non-linear and are likely to unfold on different temporal and spatial scales.

### **Paper submission**

We thus invite paper proposals that address one or several of the above mentioned themes. Paper proposals should consist of an abstract of 300 words that outlines the research question and approach as well as its relevance for transformative global climate governance. Proposals should be submitted through the conference homepage [www.berlinconference.org/2016](http://www.berlinconference.org/2016) by 30 October 2015 and will be reviewed by an international review panel. Notification of acceptance will be given by 1 February 2016. Full papers are due by 6 May 2016.

Steffen Bauer, Conference Co-Chair  
German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), Bonn, Germany

Klaus Jacob, Conference Co-Chair  
Environmental Policy Research Centre (FFU), Berlin, Germany

Okka Lou Mathis, Conference Manager  
German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), Bonn, Germany

### **Timeline**

Submission of Abstracts	30 October 2015
Notification of Acceptance	1 February 2016
Submission of Papers	6 May 2016
Conference	23-24 May 2016

### **International Steering Committee**

- Dirk Messner, German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), Bonn, Germany
- Miranda Schreurs, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany
- Frank Biermann, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands & Lund University, Sweden
- Carlos Fuller, Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, Belmopan, Belize
- Pan Jiahua, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), Beijing, China
- Jennifer Morgan, World Resources Institute (WRI), Berlin, Germany
- J. Timmons Roberts, Brown University, Rhode Islands, United States
- Heike Schroeder, University of East Anglia, Norwich, United Kingdom
- Leena Srivastava, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), New Delhi, India
- Harald Winkler, University of Cape Town (UCT), Cape Town, South Africa

### **International Symposium on Society and Resource Management (ISSRM)**

"Transitioning: Toward Sustainable Relationships in a Different World"

June 22nd-26th, 2016 in Houghton, Michigan, USA

[www.iasnr.org](http://www.iasnr.org)

### **Call for Organized Session Proposals**

The theme is designed to capitalize on Houghton's location in the heart of the Upper Midwestern Northwoods and Lake Superior coastline, complement the foci and interests of conference attendees, and resonate with participants in an era where the myriad impacts of climate change are increasingly visible and challenging.

- Join a diverse, international, intellectually stimulating conference group.
- Take a field trip and learn more about regional history, environments, problems, and solutions.
- Enjoy the beautiful Keweenaw Peninsula and its abundant trails, waterways, brewpubs, kayaking, and historical resources – all within walking distance of your housing.

Call for Organized Session Proposals: Proposals for Panels, Paper Sessions, and Workshops are invited now – the deadline for submission is November 16th, 2015. Proposals from any area of societal relationships to environment and natural resources are welcome.

Organized sessions are an opportunity to bring together a group of scholars around a particular topic. They can be a collection of 3-5 oral presentations with or without a discussant, a panel of experts on a given topic, a roundtable discussion, or a workshop. Panels and paper sessions will last 75 minutes each.

The organizer(s) should recruit participants. Organized sessions will be highlighted and given priority in the program. Complete the attached pdf form with an abstract of 2000 characters or less for your panel, paper session, or workshop along with the title; organizer(s)' names, and contact information; and, for paper sessions, lead authors and presentation titles to [ISSRM2016@gmail.com](mailto:ISSRM2016@gmail.com)

The call for Individual Paper and Poster abstracts will be issued November 16th, 2015.

**Submission Deadlines:**

November 16, 2015	
Panel & Organized Session Proposals	16 Nov 2015
Abstracts for Posters & Papers	15 Jan 2016
Early Bird Registration Ends	4 March 2016

Contact us by email at: [issrm2016@gmail.com](mailto:issrm2016@gmail.com)

**Publications**

**Books**

**Power in a Warming World: The New Global Politics of Climate Change and the Remaking of Environmental Inequality**

David Ciptet, J. Timmons Roberts, and Mizan R. Khan  
The MIT Press (September 2015)

<https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/power-warming-world>



After nearly a quarter century of international negotiations on climate change, we stand at a crossroads. A new set of agreements is likely to fail to prevent the global climate's destabilization. Islands and coastlines face inundation, and widespread drought, flooding, and famine are expected to worsen in the poorest and most vulnerable countries. How

did we arrive at an entirely inequitable and scientifically inadequate international response to climate change?

In *Power in a Warming World*, David Ciptet, J. Timmons Roberts, and Mizan Khan, bring decades of combined experience as negotiators, researchers, and activists to bear on this urgent question. Combining rich empirical description with a political economic view of power relations, they document the struggles of states and social groups most vulnerable to a changing climate and describe the emergence of new political coalitions that take climate politics beyond a simple North-South divide. They offer six future scenarios in which power relations continue to shift as the world warms. A focus on incremental market-based reform, they argue, has proven insufficient for challenging the enduring power of fossil fuel interests, and will continue to be inadequate without a bolder, more inclusive and aggressive response.

About the Authors

David Ciptet is Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies at the University of Colorado–Boulder.

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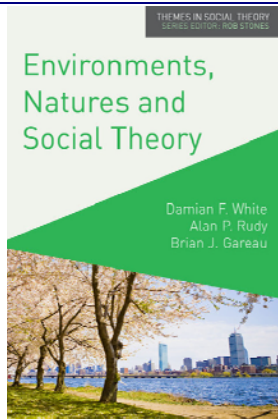
Mizan R. Khan is Professor of Environmental Science and Management at North South University in Bangladesh.

**Environments, Natures and Social Theory Towards a Critical Hybridity**

Damian White, Alan Rudy, Brian Gareau  
Palgrave Macmillan (November 2015)

<http://www.palgrave.com/page/detail/environments-natures-and-social-theory-damian-white/?isbn=9780230241039>





From climate change to fossil fuel dependency, from the uneven effects of natural disasters to the loss of biodiversity: complex socio-environmental problems indicate the urgency for cross-disciplinary research into the ways in which the social, the natural and the technological are ever more entangled. This ground breaking text moves between environmental sociology and environmental

geography, political and social ecology and critical design studies to provide a definitive mapping of the state of environmental social theory in the age of the anthropocene.

Environments, Natures and Social Theory provokes dialogue and confrontation between critical political economists, actor network theorists, neo-Malthusians and environmental justice advocates. It maps out the new environmental politics of hybridity moving from hybrid neo-liberals to end times ecologists, from post environmentalists to cyborg eco-socialists. White, Rudy and Gareau insist on the necessity of a critical but optimistic hybrid politics, arguing that a more just, egalitarian, democratic and sustainable anthropocene is within our grasp. This will only be brought into being, however, by reclaiming, celebrating and channeling the reconstructive potential of entangled hybrid humans as inventive hominids, creative gardeners, critical publics and political agents. Written in an accessible style, Environments, Natures and Social Theory is an essential resource for undergraduate and postgraduate students across the social sciences.

#### About the Authors

Damian White is Head of the Department of History, Philosophy and the Social Sciences at the Rhode Island School of Design, USA.

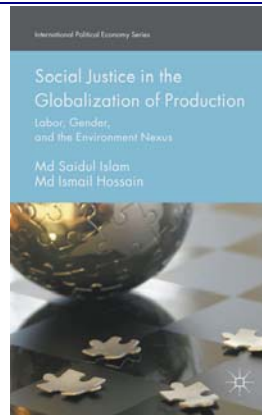
Alan Rudy is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Central Michigan University, USA.

Brian Gareau is Associate Professor of Sociology and International Studies at Boston College, USA.

#### **Social Justice in the Globalization of Production: Labor, Gender, and the Environment Nexus**

Md Saidul Islam, Md Ismail Hossain  
Palgrave Macmillan (2015)

<http://www.palgrave.com/page/detail/social-justice-in-the-globalization-of-production-md-saidul-islam/?isbn=9781137434005>



One of the long-lasting impacts of neoliberal globalization is to subjugate our entire society to serve the market economy, resulting in a 'critical nexus' comprised of flexible and exploitative labor conditions, the reincarnation and reinforcement of gendered ideologies in the workplace, and a treadmill of environmental destruction. Fundamental obstacles to the global and local response to this nexus include objective

inequality between and within nations, subjective consequences of uneven development, and 'economism', in which solutions are framed in economic language and rules that ignore or marginalize social justice. Drawing on the social justice framework propounded by, among others, Amartya Sen, Md Saidul Islam and Md Ismail Hossain unpack this critical nexus, investigating how neoliberal flexible accumulation generates unique conditions, contradictions, and confrontations in labor, gender and environmental relations. They also examine whether and how a broader global social justice can mitigate tensions and improve conditions.

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#### **Inequality, Democracy, and the Environment**

Liam Downey  
NYU Press (December 2015)

<http://nyupress.org/books/9781479843794/>

The world currently faces many severe social and environmental crises. Using a novel theoretical argument developed by the author, Inequality, Democracy, and the Environment sheds new light on the structural causes of these crises and explains how they are linked to each other. Specifically, Downey argues that these crises are to a significant degree the product of organizational, institutional, and network-based inequality, which provides economic, political, military, and ideological elites with the means to develop and control organizational networks and undemocratic institutions that they use to achieve environmentally and socially harmful goals in the face of resistance from others. To demonstrate the validity and widespread applicability of

his theoretical argument, Downey presents a series of case studies that (a) highlight several of the world's most important elite-controlled organizations, institutions, and networks and (b) show that these organizations, institutions, and networks play a key role in shaping some of the world's most critical human, social, and environmental crises. These case studies further demonstrate that undemocratic and elite-controlled organizations, institutions, and networks as diverse as the World Bank, agricultural commodity chains, policy planning networks, the military, and the news media belong to a single category of social mechanism that is responsible for much of the social and environmental devastation the world currently experiences.



#### About the Author

Liam Downey is Associate Professor of Sociology and Faculty Associate for Environmental Studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

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## Member News

### Steven Picou

Steven Picou was awarded the title of "Distinguished Professor of Sociology" by the University of South Alabama Board of Trustees on September 4th, 2015. Professor Picou will also continue to serve as Director of the USA Coastal Resource and Resiliency Center.