

ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY NEWS

Newsletter of the American Sociological Association's
Section on Environmental Sociology

Fall 2018

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FROM SECTION CHAIR

October Reflections on ASA and Beyond

With the Fall season upon us, the intense displays of political partisanship and male domination in the Senate, and the fast pace of the Fall term, our days together in Philadelphia in August could just about be another lifetime ago. We've just past the Fall Equinox and here in Eugene Oregon my own daily activities include reading climate reports and search files, attending more meetings than I can keep track of, responding to a seemingly endless stream of emails, harvesting apples, grapes and the last of the grinding corn from our garden, and getting up before dawn to write this to you. But since

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October Reflection (Cont'd)

this is our first newsletter following the 2018 ASA meetings, it seems like the space to offer some report back and reflections on those events.

As with so many events of late, this year's meetings were nothing short of momentous – a full day dedicated to Race and the Environment, a call from our ASA President, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, to attend to settler-colonialism across our discipline, a Plenary session on Environmental Justice, our section panels on Indigenous Peoples/Settler-Colonialism, Emotions, Public Sociology and a full room of Roundtable activity at 8:30 in the morning. We had productive Council and Business meetings led by then Chair, Tammy Lewis, the opportunity to welcome our new Council members and to thank our outgoing members. Our section membership is strong with 499 members as of the end of the year. Here are some photos memorializing some of the events I've mentioned in this piece.



Dr. Robert Bullard speaks at Plenary Session on Environmental Justice



Section Roundtable discussion



Section Roundtable discussion (another view)

Beyond our Environmental Sociology section sessions, Dana Fisher organized a set of three outstanding Regular Sessions on Environmental Sociology, Bob Brulle put together an impactful Regular Session on Environmental Policy, Jeff Broadbent organized a wonderful session on Feeling Climate Change, and Zulema Valdez organized a fantastic panel on Sociology of the Anthropocene. I was particularly thrilled with the session on Sociology of the Anthropocene, as I have long held out that we need scholars with area foci outside the environment to tackle climate change and the environment through their area of expertise - Dr. Valdez is an important scholar of race and ethnicity, and her attention to climate change is relatively recent. There was also an increase in the practice of opening sessions with acknowledgement of indigenous territoriality – a practice in which I invite your participation.

Highlights for me personally included the Race and Environment mini-conference, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's Presidential Address (which opened with a beautiful acknowledgement of Lenape Territoriality and a call for more sociological attention to settler-colonialism), the Environmental Justice Plenary panel organized by Dorceta Taylor, and our section panels on *Indigenous Peoples, Colonialism and Environmental Sociology*, *Emotional Politics of Environmental Threats*, and *Public Environmental Sociology*, and of course our section joint reception with the Animals and Society section!

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October Reflection (Cont'd)

Below is a photo from the standing room only *Indigenous Peoples, Colonialism and Environmental Sociology* panel, which brought together scholars on a range of topics from Indigenous social movements, the importance of cultural burning, Indigenous critiques of the Rights of Nature movement and the concept of colonial ecological violence.



ASA Panel on *Indigenous Peoples, Colonialism and Environmental Sociology*. Pictured from Left to Right: Erich Steinman, Julia Miller Cantzler, Kirsten Vinyeta, Julia Miller J.M. Bacon and Yvonne Sherwood (speaking)



Kirsten Vinyeta (University of Oregon) presenting, "Ready to Burn: State Territoriality, Fire Suppression and the Making of Karuk Vulnerability" as part of the *Indigenous Peoples, Colonialism and Environmental Sociology* Panel

Comments from panel participants spoke to the need for more work in this area. JM Bacon (Grinnell College) wrote: "I've spent every ASA in a search for the connections between Indigenous peoples and sociology and often it has been frustrating. For me it was very exciting to be part of a group of people presenting work that centers the relationship between environmental sociology and Indigenous peoples' worldview and sovereignty. I hope it's a sign of good things to come not only in environmental sociology but in sociology more broadly and in our world." Erich Steinman of Pitzer College described the panel as renewing his interest in both Sociology and

environmental sociology. I hope you will all check out my piece in the Fall Footnotes about these and other activities related to Indigenous Sociology.

Despite the time that has passed since August, my teaching, scholarship and life continue to reverberate with the words and ideas from all of you. Keep up all the good work this year and keep an eye out for the Call for next year's sessions that Chair-Elect Jill Harrison will be sending out soon. Discussions are still in the works regarding a themed pre-conference for next year so stay tuned on that as well. I close with a photo of this year's leadership team.



Pictured from left to right are Jill Harrison, Chair-Elect, Tammy Lewis Past-Chair, and Kari Marie Norgaard, Chair

Kari Marie Norgaard, Section Chair
Associate Professor of Sociology and Environmental Studies, University of Oregon

FEATURE ESSAY

Reflections on "Bridging the Gap: Race and the Environment" Mini-Conference

By:

The SES Committee on Racial Equity:
Michael Mascarenhas, *UC Berkley, Chair*
Raoul S. Liévanos, *University of Oregon*
Jennifer Carrera, *Michigan State University*
Lauren Richter, *Silent Spring Institute and*
Northeastern University's SSEHRI
Elisabeth Wilder, *Northeastern University*

The Committee on Racial Equity began preparing for the *Bridging the Gap* mini-conference in the fall of

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Reflections on Bridging the Gap (Cont'd)

2016. Given our concerns about the limited diversity within the Section on Environmental Sociology, we saw the conference as an opportunity to bring diverse practitioners together to imagine a more diverse and inclusive environmental sociology. About one hundred demographically diverse scholars, students, activists, and regulatory scientists participated, making this event a truly watershed moment for Environmental Sociology.

For those of us working at the intersection of race and the environment, we knew this would be a challenging day. Airing one's fears and frustrations in public is always a risky venture, particularly for those who have much at stake for speaking "out of turn," or simply being too honest. And survival—both personal and political—the visionary black scholar Audre Lorde (2007) reminds us, is *not an academic skill*. Much more is always on the line.

We were pleasantly overwhelmed as conference participants encouraged us to think about the intersection of race and the environment through the perspectives of Black feminism, Black Studies, Indigenous Studies, critical race theory, critical environmental justice studies (CEJS), and intersectionality theory. The first keynote, David Pellow, rearticulated his CEJS approach. CEJS "bridges the gap" by seeing "race" and "environment" as mutually constituted and by critically interrogating "carceral colonial logics" that criminalize and degrade racialized and multiply-marginalized bodies and environments throughout the world. Bob Bullard, the second keynote, spoke of the history of the environmental justice movement in the United States, emphasizing important milestones and legislation. Despite these achievements, Dr. Bullard underlined the enduring problem of racism and environmental injustice in the United States.

We had additional contributions from our academic colleagues that helped us reimagine the link between race and the environment. In the morning, conference participants gained valuable insights from Michelle Jacob, C.N.E. Corbin, and Amy Lubitow, who spoke eloquently and passionately of both personal and professional barriers to equity and diversity at various academic ranks. We particularly appreciated Dr.

Jacob's Indigenous perspective and strategies for "academic activism" and "creating a home in the academy," C.N.E. Corbin's graduate-level research and advocacy for just and democratic recreational spaces in Oakland, California, and Dr. Lubitow's recommendations for positive community-university engagement in the context of the white and gendered spaces of academia.

The next session featured research papers that encouraged us to rethink the intersection of race and the environment in differing contexts and places. Tracy Perkins illuminated California's history of multiracial and gendered environmental justice activism with implications for rethinking the racial, gender, and regional politics of the environmental justice movement. Michael Warren Murphy argued powerfully for the need to refocus environmental sociology on the lasting impact that European settler colonialism has had on socioecological relations throughout the world. Drawing on intersectionality theory, Anne Saville and Alison Adams lifted up the voices and plight of racialized and gendered collective illness experience of African American farmworkers, in general, and African American women farmworkers, in particular, who are systematically disadvantaged by Florida's agricultural industry and lax labor and pesticide regulatory regimes.

In the second paper session, our presenters consistently demonstrated how geographic space—variously conceptualized—is central to intertwined political projects of racial formation and environmental destruction. Danielle Purifoy and Louise Seamster analyzed "creative extraction" and "black towns in white space" with the case study of Tamina, Texas. In so doing, they made the forceful point: The making and unmaking of jurisdictional boundaries serve white people and spaces but "are tied to the environmental harms and extractions" inflicted on black people and spaces. George Lipsitz and Sarah Rios used an intersectional, social-ecological lens to examine how the causes, consequences, and potential cures of "valley fever" in California's San Joaquin Valley are shaped by multiple-modes of marginalization and discrimination, which only become visible when challenging regulatory and industry scientific expertise

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Reflections on Bridging the Gap (cont'd)

with “respectful and reciprocal relations of research.” This second paper session also included Manuel Matos’s initial formulation of the “territorial politics of Black mothering” in his case study of Black Women’s Mobilization for the Care of Life and Ancestral Territories. His inquiry was informed by Black feminist theory and political philosophies embedded in reproductive and environmental justice. Manuel’s deep commitment to fighting structural racism and supporting women’s rights also influenced his research. He tragically passed away one month after our conference. Manuel, we all admire the people and causes for which you advocated, and the passion you brought to your life and work. They are all inspiring to us—as is your perseverance in the face of significant academic and political obstacles to advancing your rigorous and important scholarly challenge to the cannon of environmental sociology. Manuel, you taught us much at the conference, and you have motivated us further to pursue positive changes to the conduct of environmental-sociological research and graduate student mentorship.

Our conference included spaces for advocates working outside of the academy to contribute to our project of bridging the gap between race and the environment. During lunch, conference participants benefited from conversations with members of community-based organizations in Philadelphia (i.e., Wholistic Arts, Soil Generation, the Overbrook Environmental Education Center, and Garden Justice Legal Initiative) on productive community-university partnerships to advance racial, environmental, and food justice initiatives within and beyond Philadelphia. Our afternoon “Beyond the Academy” session included presentations on the opportunities and constraints facing regulatory scientists to advance various environmental justice initiatives. This session also highlighted the transformational strategies of the Environmental and Climate Justice Program of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the continuing struggle of the Lenape people of Pennsylvania and other Indigenous peoples of the Mid-Atlantic and throughout the U.S. for basic recognition, human rights, and environmental protections.

A continuous theme throughout the conference was that a common denominator in the oppression of people of color and environmental degradation is white supremacy and the multiplicity of social divisions that it uses to uphold its influence throughout the world. Further, our section is not immune to these issues. It is the work of all of us—especially white folks—to dismantle the divisive interpersonal and institutional mechanisms that stabilize and strengthen white supremacy, multiple-marginalization, and environmental degradation. However, we diminish our collective power if we fall into the trap of pitting our oppressions against one another’s. If we pay attention to the particularities though, it can help us be solutions-oriented, to recognize that we face multiple forms of oppression they are not reducible to each other; *for the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house* (Lorde 2007). We welcome section members in our project of bridging the gap between race and the environment within and beyond environmental sociology.

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CALLS

Call for Ideas

The Teaching and Outreach Committee focused on archiving syllabi on our section website last year to advance members’ access to teaching resources. This year, we would like to address some elements of outreach that may be of use to section members (and /or beyond). Please send suggestions for augmenting the Section on Environmental Sociology’s outreach focus to Committee Chair, Erica Morrell, at erica.c.morrell@gmail.com.

PUBLICATIONS

Journal Special Issue

A special issue of *Aquaculture* with the theme, “Emerging trends in aquaculture value chains” has been published. The issue is edited by Simon Bush, Ben Belton, Md Saidul Islam, and David Little.

The role and function of value chains in governing the structure of the global aquaculture sector and trade in aquaculture products is receiving increased attention. As such, value chains are not only seen as a structural set of economic relations that generate and distribute value between firms. They are also seen as a set of social relations that structure flows of information and regulation around issues such as sustainability, as well as shaping and distributing development opportunities for producers in both export and domestic contexts.

Although increasing attention has been directed to aquaculture value chains, the literature is highly dispersed; covering a wide range of issues related to the broad political economy of specific sub-sectors, most notably shrimp and salmon. A subset of these papers has focused on new sustainability governance arrangements such as eco and organic certification. Although these issues remain highly salient under the ongoing globalization of the aquaculture industry, a range of new questions are emerging. These cover areas including, but are not limited to, the contribution of aquaculture to economic development, and the emergence of social concerns related to labor in the industry, alternative forms of private-led environmental reform. The transformation of value chains serving Southern domestic markets as part of wider food system transformation, occurring in response to opportunities presented by urbanization and rising incomes, also demands closer attention.

This special issue is a landmark publication, providing an overview of existing research on aquaculture value chains, as well as setting an agenda for future directions. Papers included in the issue will contribute to an understanding of how the social relations that structure value chain governance result in trade-offs between economic development, environmental reform and social equity in the aquaculture industry. How are value chains structured? What goals are set

for value chain governance? What firm and non-firm actors are involved in the design and implementation of value chain governance arrangements? What are the impacts of these arrangements on development, consumers and the environment?

The entire issue can be accessed at:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/aquaculture/special-issue/10XS91Q94RF>

Books

Social Science Theory for Environmental Sustainability: A Practical Guide.

Marc J. Stern

(Oxford University Press, 2018)

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/social-science-theory-for-environmental-sustainability-9780198793199?lang=en&cc=us>

Social-ecological challenges call for a far better integration of the social sciences into conservation training and practice. Environmental problems are, first and foremost, people problems. Without better understandings of the people involved, solutions are often hard to come by, regardless of expertise in biology, ecology, or other traditional conservation sciences. This novel book provides an accessible survey of a broad range of theories widely applicable to environmental problems that students and practitioners can apply to their work. It serves as a simple reference guide to illuminate the value and utility of social science theories for the practice of environmental conservation. As part of the Techniques in Ecology and Conservation Series, it will be a vital resource for conservation scientists, students, and practitioners to better navigate the social complexities of applying their work to real-world problem-solving.



Marc J. Stern is a professor in the College of Natural Resources and Environment, Virginia Tech and the Center for Leadership in Global Sustainability.

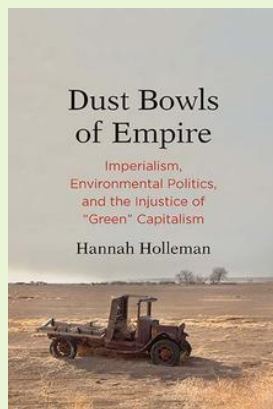
Dust Bowls of Empire: Imperialism, Environmental Politics, and the Injustice of "Green" Capitalism

Hannah Holleman
(Yale University Press, 2018)

<https://yalebooks.yale.edu/book/9780300230208/dust-bowls-empire>

The 1930s witnessed a harrowing social and ecological disaster, defined by the severe nexus of drought, erosion, and economic depression that ravaged the U.S. southern plains. Known as the Dust Bowl, this crisis has become a major referent of the climate change era, and has long served as a warning of the dire consequences of unchecked environmental despoliation.

Through innovative research and a fresh theoretical lens, Hannah Holleman reexamines the global socioecological and economic forces of settler colonialism and imperialism precipitating this disaster, explaining critical antecedents to the acceleration of ecological degradation in our time. Holleman draws lessons from this period that point a way forward for environmental politics as we confront the growing global crises of climate change, freshwater scarcity, extreme energy, and soil degradation.



Hannah Holleman is assistant professor of sociology at Amherst College, where she works in the areas of social theory, environmental sociology, environmental studies, political economy, and social movements.

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MEMBER NEWS

Justin Farrell, Assistant professor of Sociology at Yale University was awarded the NSF CAREER award (\$400,000) for his project “The Effect of Energy Transition on Rural America: Innovative Methods to Study Cultural, Technological, and Economic Change.”

Alissa Corder, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Whitman College, and **Phil Brown**, University Distinguished Professor of Sociology at Northeastern University were awarded a 3-year \$500,000 grant from NSF for a project titled, “The New Chemical Class Activism: Mobilization Around Per- and Polyfluoralkyl Substances.” The study uses a national database constructed by their lab to analyze community mobilization around contamination, conducts water testing, and studies how people understand and use testing results.

Phil Brown, University Distinguished Professor of Sociology at Northeastern University, received a 5-year \$2.6 million grant from NIEHS for a project titled, “Health Assessment, Public Education, and Capacity-building in Communities Impacted by PFAS-contaminated Drinking Water” (with multiple collaborators: PI **Laurel Schaider**, Silent Spring Institute, Co-PI **Courtney Carignan**, Michigan State University, and community partners **Testing for Pease, Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition**, and **Toxics Action Center**). The project studies PFAS chemicals’ impacts on reducing childhood vaccination response, conducts water testing, and develops a website that enables people all over the world to compare their blood and/or water exposure with other baselines, guidelines, regulatory levels, and research studies, and helps them take action to reduce exposure and remediate contamination.

Diane M. Sicotte (P.I.), Associate Professor of Sociology at Drexel University, and **Kelly A. Joyce** (Co-P.I.), Professor of Sociology and the Center for Science, Technology and Society at Drexel University, were awarded \$345,270 from NSF through the Science, Technology, and Society program for a three-year project, titled “Societal Aspects of Energy Infrastructure Expansion.” Through interviews, fieldwork and content analysis, the research team will examine the opinions of labor union leaders and members on efforts to develop and expand gas

infrastructure versus renewable energy sources. The technical and scientific expertise of unionized workers will be studied in order to understand how, and if, such expertise impacts technology design and use, or is used in political claims-making and policy formation.

The Environmental Data and Governance Initiative (EDGI), with membership that includes many Environmental Sociology section members, received two large grants. A \$500,000 grant from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and a \$200,000 grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation support EDGI’s work to archive federal environmental data, monitor changes to federal websites, and interview past and present EPA and other staff. EDGI is a 180-person organization.

Md Saidul Islam, Associate Professor of Sociology, School of Social Sciences and Asian School of the Environment, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (on sabbatical leave), recently joined the Abdul Latif Jameel World Water and Food Security Lab (J-WAFS), Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), as a visiting scholar. During his stay at MIT, Dr. Islam will be working, among other projects and collaborations, on two key strands of his research: (a) the limits and possibilities of aquaculture certification, and (b) climate change and urban food security in the Asia-Pacific region.

Please join in extending well-deserved congratulations to these distinguished, academic news-making members of the section!

TRANSITION

Sherry Cable, Professor Emerita of Sociology, announces her retirement. Here is Dr. Cable on her life, career, and what’s to come post-retirement in her own words.

I’m delighted to announce my recent retirement, after 32 years of service in the Department of Sociology at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville.

Growing up as a working-class, rural Ohio girl with five siblings and parents who only finished eighth grade, I did not expect to have such a career. I am truly privileged to have met, taught, laughed, and worked with so many fine people. I particularly love my

departmental colleagues, brilliant and caring human beings who stand up for social justice.

I have loved my job – what a great gig! But now I want to move on. So, picture tomatoes ripening on the vine in my garden, with the sweet basil plants already arcing toward them. Imagine me studying Morton Tavel's *Contemporary Physics and the Limits of Knowledge* and discovering just how limited my knowledge really is ("Is this going to be on the exam?"). See me starting up a worm farm, an indoor composting system with the dual purpose of allowing my 38 year-old Western box tortoise, Supy, to eat his fill of worms. Maybe I'll even take up exercising! Life is good.

Thank you all, my friends, for gracing my life.

Please join in extending well-deserved congratulations to Dr. Sherry Cable on her retirement!