



ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY NEWS

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

Fall 2021

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SECTION CHAIR’S MESSAGE

Greetings section members. This is my first column as chair of the section. I write this from my home in New York City, with the din of helicopters and fighter jets (almost certainly a consequence of President Biden’s visit to the United Nations General Assembly today) joining the hum of my air conditioner on this unusually warm and humid fall day. These overlapping contradictions—emissions expended to promote government investments in climate change mitigation and an environmental sociologist burning fossil fuels to work more comfortably—leave me feeling heavy with what I can only describe as the accumulation of decades of anger and disappointment arising from empty promises offered by government leaders and corporations. This year we’ve all confronted the consequences of climate inaction. It has impacted our bodies, our homes, our communities, our neighborhoods, our food systems, our forests, air, and water. It has affected us in vastly unequal and unjust ways. National and global commitments to urgently address climate change are welcome and potentially promising for the long-term future, but they come decades too late. They also remain far too precarious given what’s at stake.



I didn’t intend to begin my first newsletter article with doom and gloom, but it would be disingenuous to pretend that our community of environmental sociologists is not experiencing a range of emotions as we witness

and experience the ongoing impacts of a changing climate. I’m reminded of the work of our colleagues Kari Marie Norgaard, Ron Reed, and Nadia Kim, among others, whose scholarship foregrounds the role of emotions in the social organization of collective experiences of climate change and environmental decline. This summer, I read Nadia Kim’s (Loyola Marymount) new book, *Refusing Death: Immigrant Women and the Fight for Environmental Justice in LA* (Stanford University Press 2021), and highly recommend it.

I’ll turn now to the purpose of the fall newsletter: to reflect on the summer meeting and outline some upcoming section activities. This August we met virtually, and thanks to the flexibility, organization, and tech-savviness of the presenters and presiders, our sessions were dynamic and insightful. Section members were involved in a number of events,

including a special session on racial capitalism and the environment organized by Hannah Holleman, (Amherst College); Patrick Trent Greiner (Vanderbilt University), Brett Clark (University of Utah) and Julius Alexander McGee (Portland State University). Steve Hoffman (University of Toronto) organized two regular sessions on the theme of environmental justice. With the help of Rutgers graduate students Amanda Sie, Fred Traylor, Maria Isabel Espinoza and Robert Duffy, we had four section paper sessions and seventeen roundtables featuring many excellent papers involving the work of new and long-time members of our section. For me, a highlight of the meeting was co-organizing a session with Angela Gonzales (Arizona State University), chair of the section on Indigenous Peoples and Native Nations. Our graduate representative, Lourdes Vera (Northeastern University), put together mentoring meetings for faculty, postdocs, and graduate students. Lourdes was also instrumental in helping me organize a virtual happy hour that was well-attended, and dare I say... actually fun? The virtual awards ceremony followed the happy hour, and celebrated the work of our award recipients, Angela Serrano Zapata and Malcolm Araos for the Marvin E. Olsen Student Paper Award, Shannon Elizabeth Bell, Cara Daggett and Christine Labuski for the Allan Schnaiberg Outstanding Publication Award, Lourdes Vera for the Robert Boguslaw Award for Technology and Humanism, Jennifer Carrera and Corrie Gross for the Environmental Sociology Practice and Outreach Award. We concluded the event with a toast to Lori Peek who received the Fred Buttel Distinguished Contribution Award.

The academic year ahead will be an exciting one for our section. The Committee on Racial Exclusion and Equity has been working hard since January on a number of important initiatives, from setting a mission statement (now on our [website](#)) to planning events for section members who identify as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color). In the coming weeks, I'll share some readings and reflections to contextualize these events. The committee is chaired by Devparna Roy (Nazareth College) and consists of Yao Li (University of Florida), Roger Rentaria (University of Utah) and Yasi Shaker (University of Utah). Rachel McKane

(Brown University) was an early member of the committee and Jennifer Carrera (Michigan State) was part of the committee until she was elected to the position of section secretary. I cannot say enough about the thought and effort this committee has invested in the project of confronting and dismantling the legacy of racial exclusion and white supremacy in our section. Their job is to provide us with the vision, and we—Council and section members—are charged with doing the work. We're lucky to have their leadership, and I'm grateful to them for volunteering so much of their time. Also, committee members and council just voted on a new name for the group, as the current acronym shares a name with the Cree, an indigenous people with territories in Canada and the United States. The new name is "Committee on Racial Inclusion, Equity and Justice" or CRIEJ, and it has to be approved as a bylaw change when our section votes in the ASA spring elections. Even though that is still months away, we'll begin referring to the committee by this new name and acronym (CRIEJ).

At the end of August, we bid adieu to council members Hannah Holleman (Secretary), Raoul Liévanos (University of Oregon, Membership Committee Chair) and past-chair Jill Lindsey Harrison (University of Colorado, Boulder). Jill's leadership for the past three years has been extraordinary, and under her leadership our section undertook important work to support racial inclusion and address exclusion. I'll miss Jill's vision, superior organization, and her understanding of the inner workings of the ASA. I look forward to continued collaboration with Rachael Shwom (Rutgers University) who now moves into the past-chair position, and Sandy Marquart-Pyatt (Michigan State), who is our new chair-elect. We also have two new council members this year, Jennifer Carrera (Secretary, Michigan State) and Steve Hoffman (Membership Committee Chair, University of Toronto).

The role of Chair-Elect is to plan the section paper and roundtable sessions for next year (August 2022). Sandy sent around a survey asking members for session ideas. We'll wait to see what ASA says about the format of our 2022 meetings and whether

extended abstracts will be acceptable again this year.

I hope you enjoy this fall issue, put together by our talented newsletter editor, John Chung-En Liu (National Taiwan University).

Norah MacKendrick
Chair, Environmental Sociology Section of the
American Sociological Association
Associate Professor, Department of Sociology
Rutgers University

CALLS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

CONVERGE Collecting and Sharing Perishable Data Training Module

The CONVERGE facility, headquartered at the Natural Hazards Center at the University of Colorado Boulder, is so pleased to announce the release of the [Collecting and Sharing Perishable Data Training Module](#). This module provides an overview of what perishable data is, how to ethically collect it, and why such data is vital for advancing hazards and disaster research. You can register and access the free module here: <https://converge.colorado.edu/training-modules>.

This new module is part of a larger series designed to accelerate the education of a diverse hazards and disaster workforce. The new module, like the others in the series, concludes with a 10-question quiz. Upon successful completion of the quiz, users receive a certificate, which is worth [one contact hour of general management training](#) through the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) certification program. These modules can be useful for classroom assignments as well as other activities. Please see the [CONVERGE](#)

[Annotated Bibliographies](#) for further reading and the [Assignment Bank](#) for sample assignments.

You can sign up for additional free resources and updates at the CONVERGE website at: <https://converge.colorado.edu/signup>.

Thank you!

Coping with Catastrophe Podcast Launch

The Education in a Warming World research consortium is very proud to launch Season 1 of the Coping with Catastrophe Podcast today. It is weekly podcast that features a series of discussions with researchers, educators, and activists working on the climate and ecological crises about the impact it has on them in their personal and professional lives, their coping strategies, and how we can reimagine our world.

In this season, we chat to an environmental sociologist, climate scientists, educators, and a lead author of the IPCC report.

The first episode is now available from our [Podbean site here](#), as well as via your podcast directory of choice, and future episodes will be released every Tuesday at lunchtime IST/GMT/CET. Please enjoy! If you have any feedback including suggestions for future guests or are interested in being interviewed next season, [we would love to hear from you](#). And you can [follow us on Twitter here](#).

The podcast is supported by the Worldwide Universities Network and was developed by the Education in a Warming World research consortium.

PUBLICATIONS

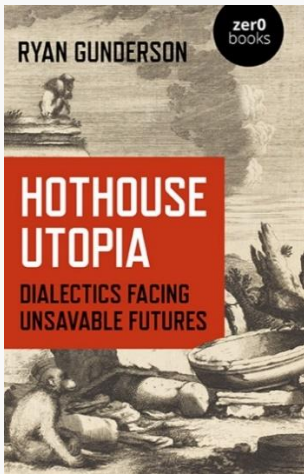
Books

Hothouse Utopia: Dialectics Facing Unsavable Futures

Ryan Gunderson

Zero Books

<https://www.johnhuntpublishing.com/zer0-books/our-books/hothouse-utopia>



With the international spread of right-wing "populism," widening inequalities, precarious forms of labor becoming normative, surveillance capitalism, and a worsening ecological crisis, the future is bleak. One issue in particular, the likelihood of catastrophic climate change, coupled with the lack of a global movement with the organization and vision to effectively challenge our suicidal social order, yields the crushing awareness that future generations will be trapped in prehistory, one in which humanity continues to be dominated by its own creations instead of shaping the historical process in line with reason. Expanding upon the ideas of Theodor W. Adorno, Ernst Bloch, Lucien Goldmann, and others, Ryan Gunderson examines the modes of action and thought through which we react to the likelihood of a catastrophic future in ways that reproduce instead of challenge the status quo, and how we can, instead, productively sustain the search for a better world against all odds.

Ryan Gunderson is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and Gerontology and Affiliate of the Institute for the Environment and Sustainability at Miami University.

Revaluing Work(ers): Toward a Democratic and Sustainable Future.

Shulze-Cleven, Tobias, and Todd E. Vachon (Eds). 2021.

New York, NY: Cornell University Press.

<https://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu/book/9780913447222/revaluing-workers/#bookTabs=1>



How can we build a future of work that meets pressing challenges and delivers for workers? Contemporary societies are beset by interrelated ecological, political, and economic crises, from climate change to democratic erosion and economic instability. Uncertainty abounds about the sustainability of democratic capitalism. Yet mainstream debates on the evolution of work tend to remain narrowly circumscribed, exhibiting both technological and market determinism.

This volume presents a labor studies perspective on the future of work, arguing that revaluing work—the efforts and contributions of workers—is crucial to realizing the promises of democracy and improving sustainability. It emphasizes that collective political action, and the collective agency of workers in particular, is central to driving this agenda forward. Moreover, it maintains that reproductive work—labor efforts from care to education that sustain the reproduction of society—can function as a crucible of innovation for the valuation and governance of work more broadly.

Tobias Schulze-Cleven is an associate professor at the School of Management and Labor Relations, Rutgers University–New Brunswick.

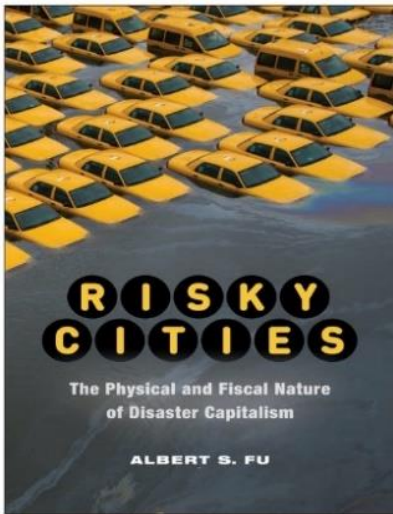
Todd E. Vachon is faculty coordinator of the Labor Education Action Research Network at Rutgers University's School of Management and Labor Relations.

Risky Cities: The Physical and Fiscal Nature of Disaster Capitalism

Albert S. Fu

Rutgers University Press (Upcoming in March 18, 2022)

<https://www.rutgersuniversitypress.org/risky-cities/9781978820302>



Over half the world's population lives in urban regions, and increasingly disasters are of great concern to city dwellers, policymakers, and builders. However, disaster risk is also of great interest to corporations, financiers, and investors. *Risky Cities* is a critical examination of global urban development, capitalism, and its relationship with environmental hazards. It is about how cities live and profit from the threat of sinkholes, garbage, and fire. *Risky Cities* is not simply about post-catastrophe profiteering. This book focuses on the way in which disaster capitalism has figured out ways to commodify environmental bads and manage risks. Notably, capitalist city-building results in the physical transformation of nature. This necessitates risk management strategies –such as insurance, environmental assessments, and technocratic mitigation plans. As such capitalists redistribute risk relying on short-term fixes to disaster risk rather than address long-term vulnerabilities.

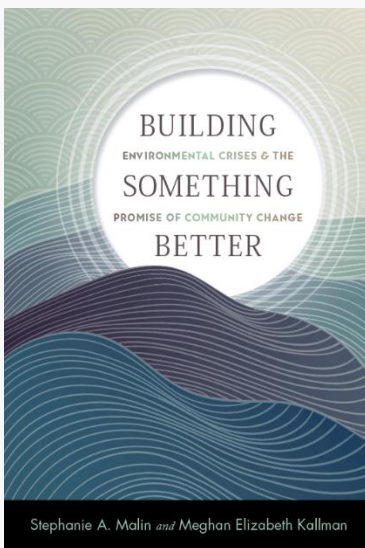
Albert S. Fu is professor of sociology at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania.

Building Something Better: Environmental Crises and the Promise of Community Change

Stephanie A. Malin, Meghan Elizabeth Kallman

Rutgers University Press (Upcoming in April 15, 2022)

<https://www.rutgersuniversitypress.org/building-something-better/9781978823686>



As the turmoil of interlinked crises unfolds across the world—from climate change to growing inequality to the rise of authoritarian governments—social scientists examine what is happening and why. Can communities devise alternatives to the systems that are doing so much harm to the planet and people? Sociologists Stephanie A. Malin and Meghan Elizabeth Kallman offer a clear, accessible volume that demonstrates the ways that communities adapt in the face of crises and explains that sociology can help us understand how and why they do this challenging work. Tackling neoliberalism head-on, these communities are making big changes by crafting distributive and regenerative systems that depart from capitalist approaches. The vivid case studies presented range from activist water protectors to hemp farmers to renewable energy cooperatives led by Indigenous peoples and nations. Alongside these studies, Malin and Kallman present incisive critiques of colonialism, extractive capitalism, and neoliberalism, while demonstrating how sociology's own disciplinary

traditions have been complicit with those ideologies—and must expand beyond them. Showing that it is possible to challenge social inequality and environmental degradation by refusing to continue business-as-usual, *Building Something Better* offers both a call to action and a dose of hope in a time of crises.

Stephanie A. Malin is an associate professor in the Department of Sociology at Colorado State University

Meghan Elizabeth Kallman is an assistant professor at the School for Global Inclusion and Social Development at the University of Massachusetts-Boston.

Ecología e igualdad: Hacia una relectura de la teoría sociológica en un planeta que se ha quedado pequeño.
[Ecology and equality: Towards a Re-reading of Sociological Theory in a Planet Which Has Become Small]
Ernest Garcia

Valencia, Tirant lo Blanch ed., 2021.

<https://editorial.tirant.com/mex/libro/ecologia-e-igualdad-hacia-una-relectura-de-la-teoria-sociologica-en-un-planeta-que-se-ha-quedaado-pequeno-ernest-garcia-9788418614668>



La fase ascendente de la civilización industrial, con sus resultados reivindicables, está quedando atrás. La promesa de mejoras interminables, que progresivamente deberían ponerse al alcance de todo el mundo, se deshace a ojos vista. Se difunde la percepción de que está iniciándose otra fase, en la que el objetivo se concentra, si acaso, en salvar los muebles. Y así, se habla cada vez menos, por ejemplo, de evitar el cambio climático, explorando en cambio las posibilidades de adaptarse a él. La palabra resiliencia sintetiza un programa consistente en prepararse para encajar los golpes. Tratando de comprender este tiempo nuevo, sin falsas esperanzas aunque también sin fatalismo, este libro se remonta al Siglo de las Luces. En el trayecto, se reivindica el mensaje ecológico de Malthus, vilipendiado una y otra vez por haber mantenido una verdad incómoda: que la naturaleza no nos deja hacer todo lo que queremos, que a veces no podemos. Se sigue el hilo del debate secular acerca de los límites

naturales al desarrollo, desde Marx y Kropotkin hasta el papa Francisco. Se presta atención a los herejes liberales, marxistas o anarquistas que intuyeron que tales límites no son evitables. Se recuerda que, en el contexto de la crisis ecológica, no hay manera de eludir los dilemas de la superpoblación. Se sacan a la luz las tensiones internas de las experiencias realmente existentes, desde el modelo europeo del bienestar hasta la política china de hijo único. Se insiste en que, si la igualdad y la democracia se cuentan entre los valores a preservar, ya se está haciendo tarde. Y se explica por qué es muy dudoso que la ciencia y la técnica nos puedan sacar del atolladero una vez más.

Ernest Garcia is a professor from the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at The University of Valencia.

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Award Committee Chairs, 2022

Allan Schnaiberg Outstanding Publication

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