

## ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY NEWS



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

Winter 2023

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### PUBLICATION COMMITTEE CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Greetings to the membership of the ASA Section on Environmental Sociology! Welcome to the Winter 2023 issue of the section newsletter.

In this issue of the newsletter, you will find two feature essays written by section members. First, Phoebe Godfrey, from the University of Connecticut, provides a personal reflection about her experiences at the COP 27 United Nations climate change conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. She explores the frustration felt by many BIPOC attendees, particularly from the global South, about developed countries' reluctance to seriously engage issues of climate justice. Second, Nabeela Farah, from Government College University in Faisalabad, Pakistan, describes the results of a study about the health risks posed to rural women in Punjab by biomass cooking fuels. This project connects themes of gender equality with the examination of drivers of air pollution.

As always, the newsletter also provides information about section members' professional accomplishments, including publications, activities in public sociology and community engagement, and career transitions.

Finally, you will find information about submitting a paper or extended abstract to this August's ASA meeting in Philadelphia at the end of the newsletter. The Section on Environmental Sociology will organize three exciting panels and a roundtable session at the meeting, and there are also many opportunities to participate in regular sessions and sessions sponsored by other sections.

All best wishes for a productive start to 2023!

Michael Haedicke  
Publications Committee Chair  
University of Maine



**From the Front Lines of CoP27: Listening to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) of the World**

Phoebe C. Godfrey  
University of Connecticut

*I came to COP 27 to say that we cannot put a price on nature, and that we are, my people, we are nature trying to defend itself. With the acceleration of false solutions, we are starting to experience mass extinctions in slow motion ...we are shooting our own foot...I'm here to say that nature cannot be financialized, commodified, commercialized because these predatory industries are causing destruction and are using the programs [those claiming to reduce carbon] to give themselves license to continue destroying nature.*

Chief Ninawa of the Huni Kui People,  
Amazon, Brazil

Back in November I, along with 14 students from the University of Connecticut and a number of other faculty, had the privilege to spend a week in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt attending the second week of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, also known as the Conference of the Parties (COP) of the UNFCCC. This was my first experience of COP, but as the number indicates it was the world's 27<sup>th</sup>. It certainly won't be the last, given how little has been and is being accomplished.

In fact, after my week of listening to BIPOC attendees from around the world, and in particular from the global South, I can assert with heartbreaking confidence that leaders of the global capitalist system have no intention of cutting into their bottom line, despite all the solutions-based fanfare claiming otherwise. These 'solutions' are ones that focus on innovative technologies, such as so-called 'green energy', or on 'carbon markets,' which continue to "put a price on nature" as opposed to confronting capitalism's mandate to grow and increase profit exponentially regardless of the social and environmental consequences.

As a result, except for the daily gathering of small groups of activists within the main courtyard and other small panels inside at the Climate Justice Pavilion and the Indigenous People's Pavilion, the words 'capitalism', 'colonialism', 'racism', 'militarism', let alone 'fossil fuels' were, as far as I could tell, not being used. This created for me a sense of unreality and delusion. Climate change has everything to do with our culture's relationship with nature, and our refusal to recognize, as Chief Ninawa does, that we too are nature. Until our culture is willing to address this disconnection, climate change and its devastating impacts, particularly on those in the global south, will continue.

When I first entered into the secured area, I came upon two ceremonial trees that were at their bases encased in plexiglass boxes that were engraved with "COP 2022 Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt". Having no doubt been put there before the event started on November 6<sup>th</sup>, these two trees were now, due to lack of attention, both DEAD! This summed up for me not only the COP, but also our culture, in that the trees were not seen as beings in their own right, but had instead been "financialized, commodified, commercialized" to give a green nature-based impression. However, once the event started, the frantic focus was placed on us, not on nature, and thus the trees were forgotten and left to die in the hot and dry desert climate.

Unsurprisingly, COP 27 did not lead to an agreement to keep temperatures under 1.5c, which was determined at the Paris Agreement of 2015 as essential to minimize the most significant harm from climate change. To do so would require a reduction of 45% in the next 6 years, whereas the current national commitments will only reduce global emissions by 1%, thus prompting predictions that temperature increases will lead to unlivable conditions, particularly for those in the global south, and or others in the global north who lack social and economic privileges.

Our culture grabs onto the glittering promises of technology as our salvation as it seems to be the only life-boat available. And yet as Jason Hickel asks in his book *Less is More: How Degrowth will Save the World*, “once we have 100% clean energy; what are we going to do with it? Unless we change how our economy works, we’ll keep doing exactly what we are doing with fossil fuels: we’ll use it to power continued extraction and production, at an ever-increasing rate, placing ever-increasing pressure on the living world, because that’s what capitalism requires.” Moreover, asserted by BIPOC attendees, particularly from the global south, creating “clean energy” requires intensive extraction of minerals from their lands and homes.

These are ‘false solutions’ as they merely continue business that is ever booming. In fact, a new study by Oxfam found that, “The investments of just 125 billionaires emit 393 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e each year – the equivalent of France – at an individual annual average that is a million times higher than someone in the bottom 90 percent of humanity”.<sup>i</sup> These ‘carbon billionaires’ “...have a collective \$2.4 trillion stake in 183 companies”. Such inequality may make us think we who are not billionaires are innocent, but our own nation is responsible for 40% of global emissions (that of course is not distributed evenly when we allow for social class differences), and collectively the global north is responsible for 92% of the damage caused by climate breakdown. Thus, the prevailing theme at this COP was for ‘loss and damage’ incurred on the part of the global south, and that was written into the agreements, but they are of course not legally binding. The causes of the ‘loss and damage’ will therefore not stop and even if payments are made the symptoms will continue exponentially.

Given these stark realities as we begin another year of climate related records in terms of heat, fire, flood, drought, as well as ever increasing extraction, logging, mining, of the Earth’s resources, let us be *courageous*. In so doing, let us face the fact that our culture and its social, political and economic systems that are all inseparable from neo-colonial racist capitalism cannot, and

will not, give us the *real* solutions we not only supposedly seek, but need to survive.

A key is for more of us who are white and / or privileged and / or living in the global north to stop and listen with our hearts to the BIPOC of the world. For despite what we may think, they are demanding not only ‘loss and damage’, but even more challengingly debt cancellation for their nations, reparations for hundreds of years of exploitation and theft, system change as opposed to climate change, and demilitarization and degrowth in opposition to business as usual.

### **Hazardous Energy Fueling the Pain of Rural Women in Pakistan**

Nabeela Farah

Government College University, Faisalabad, Pakistan

Naveed Farah

University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, Pakistan

Around 2.6 billion people, or nearly half of the global population, rely on biomass fuels. In Pakistan, more than 60% population is still rural, where fuel accessibility in terms of cleaner fuel is a challenge. Traditional fuel stoves generate large amounts of particulate matter as well as carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, oxygenated organics, free radicals, and chlorinated organics.

In rural Punjab, women's responsibility starts with the kitchen and this is the moment when she inhales dangerous gasses. Women cook food every day in poorly ventilated kitchens for the survival of their families but pay the cost in terms of poor health. The findings of my study indicated that cooking on inefficient stoves produces smoke that causes respiratory issues, eye infections, and adverse impacts and complications during pregnancy. Women's complete dependency on traditional fuels has serious consequences for their physical and mental health.

In the study area, the cooking choices are limited to agricultural residues, fuelwood, biogas system, charcoal, and dung cakes. Fuel for cooking is linked with several health issues and is divided into different stages where women travel to collect or make fuel, save it and then use it for daily services. During fuel collection, women face insect bites, severe rashes, allergies, and irritated hands.

Women's empowerment generally refers to women's individual and/or collective capacity to control their own lives, their ability to influence the direction of social changes, and their access to opportunities and resources. Gender equity theory emphasizes justice and equality among the genders based on economic, power, social, nutrition, and health among males and females. However, our study suggests that gender equity fails to get practiced in rural Punjab. Using power and energy resources for the best purpose and support remains

a troublesome issue for females. Due to economic and cultural barriers, their access to clean and energy-efficient resources remains limited.

The study explored many factors that play a part in people's fuel choices. These factors are households' income, lack of education and awareness, lack of infrastructure, price fluctuations of the clean sources, unavailability of clean sources, etc. These can only be reduced if all stakeholders provide these opportunities to rural people to educate them to use traditional fuels in modern ways. There is a need for a public policy that should be implemented in terms of biogas plants. Women must be empowered in the arena of market participation and control over expenditure decisions and appear to be more likely to invest in the usage of clean cooking fuels. Environmental education plays a massive part in awareness, so it is important to add them to the courses from the beginning.

## PUBLICATIONS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Books

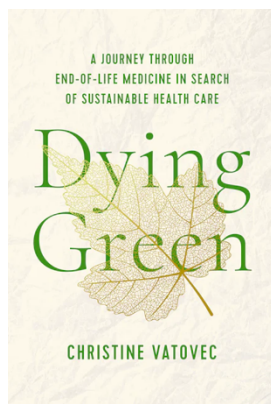
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#### ***Dying Green: A Journey Through End-of-Life Medicine in Search of Sustainable Health Care***

Christine Vatovec

Rutgers University Press

<https://www.rutgersuniversitypress.org/dying-green/9781978832107>



*Dying Green* offers an ethnographic account of the unintended consequences of medical care on the environment and public health. Through a comparative analysis of three medical modalities that serve terminally ill cancer patients (conventional care, palliative care, and hospice), *Dying Green* provides insights into the social factors that govern resource use and waste within health care, and uncovers points of intervention where changes in practice and policy can lead to better outcomes for both patients and the planet. Guided by the sociological theory of environmental flows, the revelations gained through this work provide theoretical contributions that have broad applicability to the greatest environmental challenges we face as a society.

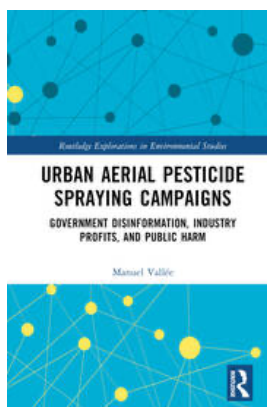
**Christine Vatovec** is a research assistant professor at the University of Vermont, an award-winning lecturer, and a fellow at the Gund Institute for Environment.

#### ***Urban Aerial Pesticide Spraying Campaigns: Government Disinformation, Industry Profits, and Public Harm***

Manuel Vallée

Routledge

<https://www.routledge.com/Urban-Aerial-Pesticide-Spraying-Campaigns-Government-Disinformation-Industry/Vallee/p/book/9781138387201>



This book examines social processes that have contributed to growing pesticide use, with a particular focus on the role governments play in urban aerial pesticide spraying operations. Beyond being applied to sparsely populated farmland, pesticides have been increasingly used in densely populated urban environments, and when faced with invasive species, governments have resorted to large-scale aerial pesticide spraying operations in urban areas. This book focuses on New Zealand's 2002–2004 pesticide campaign to eradicate the Painted Apple Moth, which is the largest operation of its kind in world history, whether we consider its duration (29 months), its scope (at its peak the spraying zone was 10,632 hectares/26,272 acres), the number of sprayings that were administered (the pesticide was administered on 60 different days), or the number of people exposed to the spraying (190,000+). This book provides an in-depth understanding of the social processes that contributed to the incursion, why the government sought to eradicate the moth through aerial pesticide spraying, the ideological strategies they used to build and maintain public support, and why those strategies were effective.

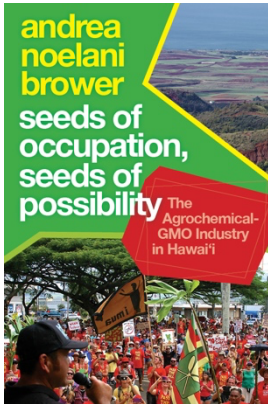
**Manuel Vallée** is a Senior Lecturer of Sociology in the School of Social Sciences at the University of Auckland, New Zealand

***Seeds of Occupation, Seeds of Possibility: The Agrochemical-GMO Industry in Hawaii***

Andrea Noelani Brower

West Virginia University Press

<https://wvupressonline.com/seeds-of-occupation-seeds-of-possibility>



Hawai'i is a primary site for development of herbicide-resistant corn seed and, until recently, was host to more experimental field trials of genetically engineered crops than anywhere else in the world. It is also a node of powerful resistance. While documentaries and popular news stories have profiled the biotech seed industry in Hawai'i, *Seeds of Occupation, Seeds of Possibility* is the first book to detail the social and historical conditions by which the chemical-seed oligopoly came to occupy the most geographically isolated islands in the world and made the soils of Hawai'i the epicenter of agrochemical and agricultural biotechnology testing. Andrea Brower, an activist-scholar from Hawai'i, examines the consequences related to genetically engineered seed development for Hawai'i's people and the social movement that has risen in response. With insights beyond the islands, *Seeds of Occupation, Seeds of Possibility* illuminates why visions for a radically better world must be expanded by intersectional and systemically oriented movements.

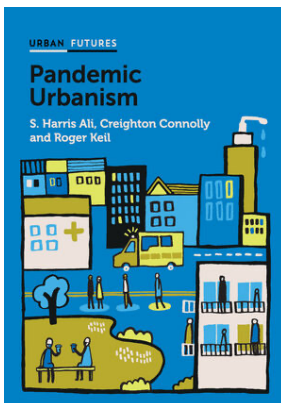
**Andrea Noelani Brower** is an activist-scholar from Kaua'i who teaches in sociology, environmental studies, and leadership studies at Gonzaga University.

***Pandemic Urbanism: Infectious Diseases on a Planet of Cities***

S. Harris Ali, Creighton Connolly, and Roger Keil

Wiley

<https://www.wiley.com/en-us/Pandemic+Urbanism%3A+Infectious+Diseases+on+a+Planet+of+Cities-p-9781509549856>



Emerging infectious disease outbreaks have transformed the very nature of urban life worldwide, even as the extent and experience of pandemics are shaped by the planetary urban condition. *Pandemic Urbanism* critically investigates these relationships in a world faced with its first pandemic on a majority urban planet. The authors reveal the social and historical context of recent infectious disease events and how they have variously transformed the urban fabric. They highlight the important role played by socio-ecological processes associated with the global urban periphery – suburban or post-suburban zones and hinterland areas of “extended” urbanization – changing mobility patterns, and new forms of urban governance and pandemic response. The book develops novel insights for post-pandemic urban governance and planning grounded in the quest for social and spatial justice.

In doing so, it reveals a paradox at the heart of pandemic urbanism: urban life enables contagion to

spread easily, yet at the same time offers unique possibilities to contain and respond to disease outbreaks.

**S. Harris Ali** is Professor of Sociology at York University. **Creighton Connolly** is Assistant Professor of Urban Studies at the University of Hong Kong. **Roger Keil** is Professor of Environmental and Urban Change at York University.

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## **PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**Tracy Perkins** (Arizona State University) participated in a radio interview with Rick Kleiffel on "Narrative Species," KSQD. Aired 5-6pm, Oct. 21. Audio recording and written book review available at <https://narrativespecies.wordpress.com/2022/10/21/tracy-perkinsevolution-of-a-movement>

**Tracy Perkins** (Arizona State University) published an article titled "Environmental Justice has the White House's Attention, Building on 40 Years of Struggle – But California Suggests New Funding Won't Immediately Solve Deeply Entrenched Problems" in the November 9, 2022 issue of *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/environmental-justice-has-the-white-houses-attention-building-on-40-years-of-struggle-but-california-suggests-new-funding-wont-immediately-solve-deeply-entrenched-problems-181137>.

**Benjamin Leffel** (University of Michigan) and **Michele Acuto** (Melbourne School of Design) published an op-ed in the Chicago Council on Global Affairs titled "Better City Network Data Empowers Climate Action From Below". <https://globalaffairs.org/research/working-paper/better-city-network-data-empowers-climate-action-below>.

**Angela Frederick** (University of Texas at El Paso) published a Quick Response Report titled "Texans with Disabilities during Winter Storm Uri: A Qualitative Study" through the Natural Hazards Center. <https://hazards.colorado.edu/quick-response-report/texans-with-disabilities-during-winter-storm-uri>.

## **TRANSITIONS & HONORS**

**Brian O'Neill** accepted a position as Postdoctoral Research Scholar at the Arizona State University College of Global Futures in the School of Ocean Futures, affiliated with the University of Washington and Nippon Foundation Ocean Nexus Center in the College of the Environment.

## ASA PAPER/EXTENDED ABSTRACT CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

There are several different avenues to submit your paper or extended abstract. Full submission instructions are at <https://www.asanet.org/annual-meeting/2023-annual-meeting/>.

**Regular Sessions** are sessions that are planned around a general topic/area of study and therefore do not issue individual calls. Regular sessions are open to all paper/extended abstract submissions that meet the criteria below. Regular sessions are independent of ASA Section programming.

**Section Sessions** are planned by the ASA Sections. Section sessions are open to all paper/extended abstract submissions that meet the criteria below. Calls will be posted soon.

**Roundtable Sessions** are sessions that use the roundtable model where multiple papers are presented at a single round table concurrent with other roundtables. Individual round tables are organized around a common theme or subject. ASA Sections often sponsor roundtables and there is the Open Refereed Roundtable, independent of the ASA Sections, that is an all topic roundtable session. Roundtable sessions are open to all paper/extended abstract submissions that meet the criteria below.

**Student Forum Sessions** provide an outlet for graduate and undergraduate sociology students. Student Forum sessions are open to all paper/extended abstract submissions that meet the criteria below. Calls will be posted soon.

### Submission Policies

- Submissions must reflect original work or major developments in previously reported work. Papers are NOT eligible if 1. They have been presented previously at ASA or other professional meeting, 2. Published prior to the meeting or accepted for publication before being submitted, or 3. Modified in only

secondary respects after presentation or publication.

- Submitters may elect to submit either full papers (15-35 pages) or extended abstracts (3-5 pages). **Authors submitting an extended abstract are required to provide a completed paper one month prior to the start of the meeting if accepted.**
- Only one single-authored paper presentation is permitted. Authors who have more than one single-authored paper accepted must decide which paper will be presented and inform the session organizer of the session from which they wish to withdraw immediately. This does not apply to individuals who are not the presenting author on multi-authored papers.
- Authors may submit a paper to a regular session topic and elect a section topic or roundtable as a secondary choice. Authors may not submit to a regular session topic as a first and second choice. The online submission system provides submission options reflecting this policy.
- Authors may submit a paper to a section topic and elect a secondary section topic, roundtable or regular session topic choice. The online submission system provides submission options reflecting this policy.
- Authors may submit to a roundtable session as their primary choice, as a secondary, or tertiary option. Only roundtable sessions may be selected as a tertiary choice and the online submission system provides options that reflect this policy.
- If a submission is not accepted by the primary choice, it will be transferred automatically to the second choice and/or third choice.
- Submitting individuals are encouraged to hold membership in ASA but membership is not required to register.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY SECTION SESSIONS AT THE ASA ANNUAL MEETING**

### **Creative interventions in environmental-sociology theory**

In this session, we aim to create an inclusive and inspiring space to discuss how new perspectives and new realities can be leveraged to offer creative interventions in environmental-sociology theory. Both conceptual and empirical presentations that offer constructive critique and advances in our theorizing of environment-society relations are welcome.

Session Organizer: Debra J. Davidson, University of Alberta

### **Intersectionality and Justice**

Environmental and climate justice have long been a core field of study in environmental sociology. This research record has not always reflected a fulsome intersectional approach to justice, however, this has begun to change. This session will focus on integrating environmental justice scholarship with emerging research that forefronts Colonialism, Indigenous Knowledges, Queer Ecologies, Masculinities and Black Feminism, among other intersectional approaches.

Session Organizer: Debra J. Davidson, University of Alberta

### **New insights in the sociology of climate change**

Environmental sociologists have provided crucial new knowledge regarding the social dimensions of climate change for over 20 years. The dramatic escalation of impacts of climate change, however, have exacerbated old and introduced new political conflicts, justified new response strategies, and offered new realizations regarding the future of democracy and wellbeing in our society-environment relations, all of which will be the subjects of discussion in this session.

Session Organizer: Debra J. Davidson, University of Alberta

## **Section on Environmental Sociology Roundtables**

Session Organizer: Debra J. Davidson, University of Alberta

## **Section Officers (2022-2023)**

### **Chair**

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Michigan State University

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University of Alberta

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Nikhil Deb

#### **Fred Buttel Distinguished Contribution**

Norah MacKendrick

#### **Teaching and Mentorship Award**

**Practice and Outreach Award**  
Alissa Cordner

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**Newsletter Editor:** Michael Haedicke

**Website Manager:** Michael Lengefeld

**Listserv Manager:** Jean Boucher

**Social Media:** Christina Ergas

### **Section Website:**

<http://www.envirosoc.org/wordpress/>

**Section Listserv:** [envirosoc@listserv.neu.edu](mailto:envirosoc@listserv.neu.edu)

**Grad Listserv:** [envirograds@listserv.neu.edu](mailto:envirograds@listserv.neu.edu)

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