

ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY NEWS

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

Winter 2018 (January 15)

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A MESSAGE FROM THE SECTION CHAIR

Dear Environmental Sociology Section Members,

I wish you all a satisfying and sufficient new year. I hope you have found the time to reflect on last year and have nourished yourselves for the year ahead. There's so much work to be done.

Let me begin by thanking some of the people who have been critical in getting the work of the section done over the last few months. Thank you to Kari Norgaard, Chair-Elect, who has created some provocative panel topics for our 2018 meeting in Philadelphia. In addition to roundtables, Kari has solicited papers for sessions on Public Environmental Sociology, Emotional Politics of Environmental Threats,



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Message from Section Chair (cont'd)

and Indigenous Peoples, Colonialism and Environmental Sociology. In addition to this terrific lineup, the day before ASA, on August 10th, thanks to our Committee on Racial Equity - J.M. Bacon, Jennifer Carrera, Raoul Lievanos, Michael Mascarhenas (chair), Lauren Richter, and Elisabeth Wilder – our section is sponsoring a one-day mini-conference: “Bridging the Gap: A Mini-Conference on Race and the Environment” at Temple University. A call for papers can be found in this newsletter. I’m grateful to all of you who are looking into how the contributions of our section interact and overlap with other areas of sociology. We have developed considerably as a field over our forty years.

In terms of some of the less glamorous work of our section, a big thanks to Brian Gareau and the rest of the Nominations Committee (Kari Norgaard and Kishi Animashaun Ducre) for putting together a slate of candidates for our annual election. Thanks, too, to those of you who have agreed to run. And last but not least, thanks to our newsletter editor, Lazarus Adua, who does a great job pulling together this newsletter, a key tool in our section’s communication.

In terms of some of the work to be done, please nominate your colleagues for our section awards. Awards nominations are due in March to Alissa Cordner, Andrew Jorgenson, and Erica Morrell. This year there are awards for the Marvin E. Olsen Student Paper, the Allan Schnaiberg Outstanding Publication Award, the Fred Buttel Distinguished Contribution Award, and the Teaching and Mentorship Award. Details can be found on the section website (<http://envirosoc.org/wordpress/section-awards/>).

Wishing you all the best,

Tammy L. Lewis
CUNY – Brooklyn College & The Graduate Center
Chair, Environmental Sociology Section

FEATURE ARTICLE

Housing, Home, and the Sociology of Flammable Landscapes: Reflections on California’s Largest Wildfire

Amanda McMillan Lequeieu
University of Wisconsin-Madison

We are all watching the hills, those of us who have not evacuated. The air smells of smoke. For ten days, the ash has fallen like a sinister snow, and the low humidity—less than 1%—parches our lips. I feel the fire in my body.

My first week living in Santa Barbara County was in the [Los Padres National Forest](#), the tinderbox now on fire. The chaparral that revived in the early 2017 storms that ended California’s [six-year drought](#) are now desiccated by the hot Santa Ana winds. These winds gather one thousand miles away, at the confluence of high pressure on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains and the dry, hot desert air simmering on the Great Basin. As the hot air breaches the Sierras and tumbles down [towards the beaches of the Coast](#), the winds gather speed and gust through the mountain passes and tight canyons of the Los Padres National Forest above Santa Barbara. The wind-blown, tinder-dry hills are primed for flame.

Fire has been, for centuries, omnipresent in California. Autumn is wildland fire season, with the “[cruel and capricious Santa Ana](#)...[determining] whether a fire will lay down like a docile dog or whip up into a frenzy of uncontrollable fury.” But, at the same time, there is little natural about these present-day fires. Climate patterns are shifting. The warm air in the desert is getting hotter; the Western fire season now extends into Christmas—[105 days longer than in 1970](#). All the hills need is an ignition source.

On Monday, December 4th, 2017, a brush fire broke out near Thomas Aquinas College in Ventura County, California. Before midnight, the fire had [exploded to 25,000 acres](#). By December 17th, the fire stretched [270,000 acres into Santa Barbara County](#). The cause of the Thomas fire is yet unknown. Even though it was likely birthed by humans, as are 95% of California fires,

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Reflections on California's Largest Wildfire (cont'd)

the fire is viewed a wild, inhuman thing, a monster of heat and destruction. The Santa Barbara County fire division chief [told his crews](#) "This fire is beast and you're gonna kill it. I have no doubt."

The fire's proximity to cities and their people makes it a particularly frightening collision of nature and society. In the red half-light of a smoke-covered sun, a group of us stand on State Street, faces upturned in horror as we watch a gust of wind fan a blaze in the hills above downtown Santa Barbara. The flames leap above a mansion, its adobe archways and decorative palm trees dim and fragile in the ashen glow. We cannot see them, but firefighters are likely standing guard to protect the structure. They wrap evacuated homes in metal sheeting to keep sparks from landing; they form a perimeter of firebreaks, flame retardant, and water hoses; they wait until the monster approaches.

As a sociologist of home, with its many economies, landscapes, and cultures, I grapple with the irony of fire threatening these visible symbols of the southern California's drastic income disparity. Behind walls and gates, large houses in the foothills near Santa Barbara and Montecito are home to some of the wealthiest—stars of Hollywood, musicians, bankers. Now, these rooms with a view are monuments to the immobility of wealth, stuck into a mountainside of tinder, and guarded by masked firefighters with hoses.

It is not just the homes of the wealthy that are threatened. Fire is indiscriminate. Within its first week, the Thomas Fire consumed both the Ventura Botanical Gardens and the Vista del Mar Psychiatric Hospital. That same week, a homeless encampment tucked beneath Los Angeles mansions ignited, and then was engulfed by, a small blaze. In Santa Barbara, the middle- and working-class Hispanic neighborhoods east of State Street, and the zoo, [about the southern edge of the mandatory evacuation zone](#).

The burning hills above that vulnerable neighborhood are part of the Los Padres National Forest. Stretching 220 miles from south Santa Barbara County to Monterey, California's second largest national forest draws nearly two million annual visitors to hike, fish, bike, and backpack. The forest has, in recent years, adopted an entirely different and unintended use. [Fifty-five](#)

[campgrounds](#), both state-sponsored and private, dot this forest. One is Paradise Campground, a state campground that unintentionally houses long-term residents. In their ramshackle RVs and worn tents are painters, street musicians, students, and retirees who commute down the mountain to Santa Barbara, Ojai, and Ventura, and then up again each night to their cook stoves and headlamps and wild noises in the night.

These refugees of southern California's housing crisis park and pitch at Paradise year-round. In summer, they rotate to nearby campgrounds after their three-week maximum was reached, but in winter, there is no maximum stay, so they come to Paradise, with its flush toilets, familiar faces, and rent cheaper than could be possibly found in the beach towns below. This was better, one resident camper told me, this "fasting from landlords," as one woman told me. Being in nature for \$30 a night, no longer enmeshed in the stress of rent hikes and eviction, they could claim some control over their lives.

My husband and I camped at Paradise, in "The Land of Many Uses," as declared on one Los Padres National Forest welcome sign, for only one week. That wooded place, with early risers greeted by songbirds flitting between the live oaks, was a respite from the multiple rental applications, the fees, the competition for a rental in a town with 0.06% vacancy rate. The day we signed a lease for a one-bedroom apartment in Santa Barbara (that, we immediately calculated, would cost us \$55 a night), we reluctantly paid for our final night at Paradise. Civilization calls, with a UHaul to unpack and a new city to learn. We can go back up into nature, into the mountains, later, we assured each other.

Now, I wonder if the residents of Paradise were more at ease in this moment of crisis than us living in the structures down below. Called to evacuate early in the fire's progression, they carry their homes and worldly possessions with them in their RVs, campers, and cars—working-class nomads, making precarious homes in one of the wealthiest regions in the United States. They can, however painfully, leave the shrub oaks of Paradise Road and, at another campsite, park, unpack, and start again.

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Reflections on California's Largest Wildfire (cont'd)

But us, the lucky, the wealthy, or at least, the willing-to-leave, watch the fire roar closer to our houses. Strangers make sober eye contact above their face-masks; they talk in coffee shops in nervous tones; they wander bewildered past shops shut down the week before Christmas. We are told, every day, to ["be prepared to leave at a moment's notice."](#) The vulnerability, the fear, is seeping into our bones. The power dynamic between nature and humanity are flipped; while we typically shape our environments with force, if not intentionality, we now have little control over our landscapes, our air, our hills. We all know what [N95 masks](#) are now, and we cajole each other—complete strangers!—to put them on, for the air is toxic. The winds are wild. The fire is a beast. The structures we build are vulnerable. Masked and wide-eyed, we stare at the sky and ask, when must we leave?

The fire forces all of us to contemplate leaving and staying in place. Entering my one-bedroom apartment, I begin packing. Evacuations haven't yet been ordered for this neighborhood, but we should pack, just in case. We just paid our third month's rent, and put pictures on the wall two weeks ago. Likely, this apartment won't burn. But that mansion might, and parts of those mountains certainly will. In fact, to keep the fire far from the houses in the beach towns below, fire crews actively direct the fire towards an old burn in the forest, not far from Paradise.

Does the land belong to humans, or do we belong to a landscape? We feel the effects of its climate, we establish bonds to a place through structures, roads, and embodied knowledge, but clearly, we cannot control the effects of our actions on the land itself. Landscape-scale crises blur the lines between rural and urban, nature and structures. The forests will heal quickly from the fire, likely bearing wildflowers in the spring in the newly-raised land. But the fire will not erase the housing crisis in California. In fact, the [housing market may be even more inhospitable](#) for middle-class residents after the fires are contained. The landscape itself, so easily triggered into flame, periodically challenges residents of this region to reconsider our relationship to place.

In the haze of smoke, we ask: what makes a place home? Is it the familiar archway of a mansion door, or

the rustle of a tent flap? Is it decades spent in a single place, or dreams hoped for the future?

These are questions for this fire season, this decade of climate science, and this generation of both environmental scholarship and inhabited, bodily experiences of everyday people. We are all watching assumed boundaries between nature and people, precarity and stability, home and transience blur. But for now, I strap on my face mask and move our packed bags towards the door.

A version of this essay was first published on the Center for Culture, Nature, and Environment's blog, Edge Effects, at <http://edgeeffects.net/thomas-fire/>.

CALLS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Conference: Bridging the Gap

The Environmental Sociology Section Organizing Committee announces a one day mini-conference with the theme, Bridging the Gap: A Mini-Conference on Race and the Environment. The conference will take place on August 10, 2018 - the day before the American Sociological Association's Annual Meeting in Philadelphia. The goal of the mini-conference is to bring together scholars and activists from a variety of social and disciplinary locations in order to break down disciplinary and section-based silos and facilitate new theoretical possibilities and collaborative networks at the intersection of race and the environment. To achieve this goal, the mini-conference will bring together US-based scholars to share work that connects race and the environment and expands the theoretical reach and policy applications of conventional environmental sociology such as Black feminism, Black Studies, Indigenous Studies, critical race theory, environmental justice, and intersectionality. A call for participants will be forthcoming. For more information please contact Michael Mascarenhas: mascarenhas@berkeley.edu.

Job –Washington State University (Job Id: 14472)

The Department of Sociology, College of Arts and Sciences, Washington State University in Pullman, WA

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Job Announcement (Cont'd)

invites applications for a permanent, full-time, tenure or tenure-track, 9-month academic appointment as the Boeing Company Distinguished Professor of Environmental Sociology. The rank will be at the Associate or Full professor level depending on qualifications, beginning August 16, 2018. The department encourages exceptionally well-qualified candidates at an advanced assistant professor level to consider submitting application materials.

Please contact Professor Thomas Rotolo, Chair of the Search Committee, 509-335-4595 or rotolo@wsu.edu with any questions regarding the position. The full job description is posted the ASA Job Bank.

Grants and Fellowship Information Requested

Alissa Cordner and Erica Morell, on behalf of the Section Council, are compiling a list of grants and fellowships of interest to environmental sociologists to share with the section. This includes relatively consistent sources of funding for graduate students, post-docs, and faculty (as opposed to short-term fellowships or post-docs tied to specific grants).

If you are aware of possible funding sources, please send an email with the title of the funding source to alis-sa.cordner@gmail.com and / or eri-ca.c.morrell@gmail.com. It will also be helpful if you can include a brief description of why this funding source is appropriate for environmental sociologists, due dates, a website, and / or any other relevant information."

Special Issue of *Society*

Dr. Md Saidul ISLAM, Guest Editor for *Societies*, invites manuscripts for an upcoming special issue of *Societies* (ISSN 2075-4698). The theme of the special issue is *The Role of Environmentalism in Social Development*. Find below more information about the issue.

Environmentalism, a broad environmental philosophy and movement, is one of the most dynamic, pervasive, and transnational social movements today. It has, however, no clear beginning. The movement emerged in different places at different times, and usually for different reasons. The earliest environmental issues were local (McCormick 1989). Now, environmentalism goes

beyond the literary appreciation of landscapes, and the scientific analysis of species. It is "a social program, a charter of action, which seeks to protect cherished habitats, protest against their degradation, and prescribe less destructive technologies and lifestyles (Guha 2000:3).

This special issue "The Role of Environmentalism in Social Development" will not only focus on dynamics of environmentalism and its narratives but also examine its impacts on social development such as: how it generates millions of supporters, changes the way people live, generates new body of knowledge, encourages a rethinking of economic priorities, brings new political parties and broad environmental agendas in the mainstream political parties, becomes an issue in international relations, and makes people feel that nature is finite and misuse of it threatens human existence.

We will welcome conceptual, theoretical, and empirical works related to diverse contours of environmentalism and their impacts on social development.

Deadline for manuscript submissions: August 1, 2018
Web link: http://www.mdpi.com/journal/societies/special_issues/Environmentalism

PUBLICATIONS

Books

What is Critical Environmental Justice?

David N. Pellow
(Polity Press, 2017) <https://www.wiley.com/en-us/What+is+Critical+Environmental+Justice%3F-p-9781509525324>

Human societies have always been deeply interconnected with our ecosystems, but today those relationships are witnessing greater frictions, tensions, and harms than ever before. These harms mirror those experienced by marginalized groups across the planet.

In this novel book, David Naguib Pellow introduces a new framework for critically analyzing Environmental Justice scholarship and activism. In doing so he extends the field's focus to topics not usually associated with environmental justice, including the Israel/

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What is Critical Environmental Justice? (cont'd)

Palestine conflict and the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States. In doing so he reveals that ecological violence is first and foremost a form of social violence, driven by and legitimated by social structures and discourses. Those already familiar with the discipline will find themselves invited to think about the subject in a new way.

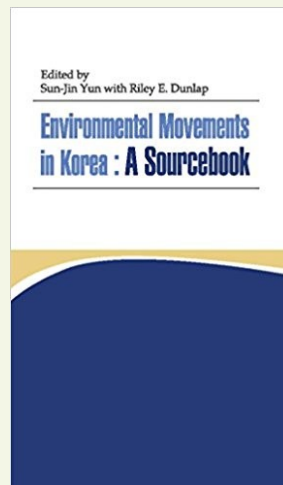
This book will be a vital resource for students, scholars, and policy makers interested in transformative approaches to one of the greatest challenges facing humanity and the planet.

David Naguib Pellow is Dehlsen Professor of Environmental Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Sourcebook on Environmental Movements in Korea

Sun-Jin Yun and Riley E. Dunlap
(Seoul, South Korea: Academy of Korean Studies Press, 2017)

The series A Sourcebook organizes and provides primary data sorted by subjects and areas on the understanding of and research into modern Korean society and culture in an attempt to meet academic interest on the foreign study of Korea in its rapid achievements of industrialization, democratization, and social change. This volume provides a comprehensive overview of environmentalism in Korea by focusing on the key problems and issues that have generated various strands of citizen activism on behalf of environmental protection. It traces the rise of environmental degradation from Korea's rapid post-war industrialization up to the present, carefully documenting various eras of



activism over a changing and broadening range of problems: industrial pollution, major development projects, nuclear power and most recently climate change. For each era the major problems and controversies generating citizen activism are identified and carefully described, with detailed time lines, identification of key actors, documentation of campaign materials and governmental responses, and detailed presentations of press releases and other statements by these actors. The result is an invaluable sourcebook on the evolution of environmental degradation in Korea, the emergence of the citizens movements that arose to combat them, and the current status of Korea's multi-faceted and continually evolving Environmental Movement. It will be useful to scholars, activists, officials and interested citizens.

Sun-Jin Yun is Professor of Environmental and Energy Policy and Environmental Sociology at the Graduate School of Environmental Studies, Seoul National University.

Riley E. Dunlap is Regents Professor of Sociology at Oklahoma State University and Past-President of the International Sociological Association's Research Committee on Environment and Society.

Carbon Footprints as Cultural–Ecological Metaphors

Anita Girvan
(London: Earthscan, 2018) <https://www.routledge.com/Carbon-Footprints-as-CulturalEcological-Metaphors/Girvan/p/book/9781138658066>

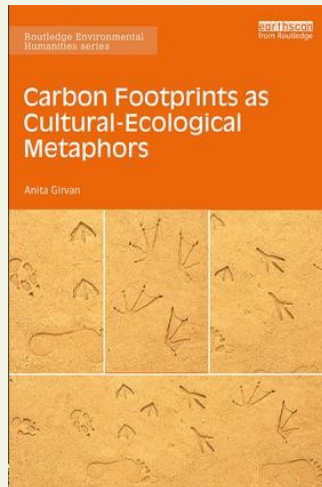
Through an examination of carbon footprint metaphors, this book demonstrates the ways in which climate change and other ecological issues are culturally and materially constituted through metaphor.

The carbon footprint metaphor has achieved a ubiquitous presence in Anglo-North American public contexts since the turn of the millennium, yet this metaphor remains under-examined as a crucial mediator of political responses to the urgent crisis of climate change. Existing books and articles on the carbon footprint typically treat this metaphor as a quantifying metric, with little attention to the shifting mediations and practices of the

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Carbon Footprints (cont'd)

carbon footprint as a metaphor. This gap echoes a wider gap in understanding metaphors as key figures in mediating more-than-human relations at a time when such relations profoundly matter. As a timely intervention, this book addresses this gap by using insights from environmental humanities and political ecology to discuss carbon footprint metaphors in popular and public texts. This book will be of great interest to researchers and students of environmental humanities, political ecology, environmental communication, and metaphor studies.



Anita Girvan is a Visiting Scholar at the Centre for Global Studies and teaches in the School of Environmental Studies at the University of Victoria in Canada.

Catch and Release: The Enduring yet Vulnerable Horseshoe Crab

Lisa Jean Moore
(NY: NYU Press) <https://nyupress.org/books/9781479848478/>

Horseshoe crabs are considered both a prehistoric and indicator species. They have not changed in tens of millions of years and provide useful data to scientists who monitor the health of the environment. From the pharmaceutical industry to paleontologists to the fishing industry, the horseshoe crab has made vast, but largely unknown, contributions to human life and our shared ecosystem. *Catch and Release* examines how these intersections steer the trajectory of both species' lives, and futures.

Based on interviews with conservationists, field biologists, ecologists, and paleontologists over three years of fieldwork on urban beaches, noted ethnographer Lisa Jean Moore shows how humans literally harvest the life out of the horseshoe crabs. We use them as markers for understanding geologic time, collect them for agricul-

tural fertilizer, and eat them as delicacies, capture them as bait, then rescue them for conservation, and categorize them as endangered.

The book details the biomedical bleeding of crabs; how they are caught, drained of 40% of their blood, and then released back into their habitat. The model of catch and release is essential. Horseshoe crabs cannot be bred in captivity and can only survive in their own ecosystems. Moore shows how horseshoe crabs are used as an exploitable resource, and are now considered a "vulnerable" species.



An investigation of how humans approach animals that are essential for their survival, *Catch and Release* questions whether humans should have divine, moral, or ethical claims to any living being in their path.

Lisa Jean Moore is Professor of Sociology and Women's Studies at Purchase College, State University of New York. She is author of *Sperm Counts: Overcome by Man's Most Precious Fluid* and co-author of *Missing Bodies: The Politics of Visibility* and *Buzz: Urban Beekeeping and the Power of the Bee*. She is also co-editor of the collection *The Body Reader* and, with Monica Casper, oversees the series *Biopolitics: Medicine, Technoscience, and Health in the Twenty-First Century* for NYU Press.

Journal Articles and Book Chapters

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MEMBER NEWS

Stella M. Čapek, former Chair of the Section on Environmental Sociology, was installed as the Elbert L. Fausett Distinguished Professor of Sociology at Hendrix College on August 31, 2018.

Many congratulations to Dr. Stella M. Čapek!

Riley Dunlap, Oklahoma State University, gave a keynote address at the 6th International Symposium on Environmental Sociology in East Asia held in Taipei, Taiwan in October.

Many congratulations to Dr. Riley Dunlap!

Thomas Dietz, Michigan State University, gave the 2017 Mitchell Lecture on Sustainability at the Senator George J. Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions at the University of Maine entitled "Facts versus Values: How Can We Make Better Decisions." <https://umaine.edu/mitchellcenter/news/mitchell-lecture/2017-mitchell-lecture-sustainability/> He also gave a keynote address to the 6th Annual Sociology of Development

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Thomas Dietz (cont'd)

Conference held at Wayne State University, 5-7 October 2017, entitled "Sustainability, Inequality and Social Transformation: The Problems We Face," and a plenary lecture at the Summer School on Theory in Environmental Psychology, 7 July 2017, entitled "Challenges for Environmental Psychology/ Environmental Decision Making."

Many congratulations to Dr. Thomas Dietz!

K. Nicholls delivered a presentation titled, *Array of Human Effects of Oil Spills at Preparing for a Rapid Response to Major Marine Oil Spills: A Workshop on Research Needs to Protect the Health and Well-Being of Communities*, sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences, Washington, DC, August 2, 2017.

Many congratulations to Dr. K Nicholls!

Michael Mascarenhas published an interesting feature article titled, "Day Without Water" suggests "Flint Strong Stones" will not be silenced" in the Village Magazine. To read the article, follow this link: <http://www.eastvillagemagazine.org/2017/10/16/commentary-day-without-water-suggests-flint-strong-stones-will-not-be-silenced/>.

Many congratulations to Dr. Michael Mascarenhas!

TRANSITIONS

Timothy J. Haney has been promoted to Professor of Sociology at Mount Royal University, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Many congratulations to Dr. Timothy J. Haney!

Andrew Jorgenson, immediate past Chair of the Environmental Sociology Section, is now Chair of the Sociology Department at Boston College.

Many congratulations to Dr. Andrew Jorgenson!