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Newsletter of the American Sociological Association's  
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# Message from the Chair

Erin McDonnell

This is my last Chair's note in my year serving as chair for the Development section — it has been a pleasure serving the section. As my parting gift I wanted to share some work you might not otherwise come across because it is being done outside of sociology, but which I have lately found myself returning to again and again in my own thinking and that I think has some interesting affinities for sociology and some remaining room for sociological contributions in the area. I hope you may find something new to be inspired by here as well.



But first, I want to thank everyone who contributes to the vitality of the section. This includes the people who are elected officers who meet throughout the year to discuss issues and plan for how we can continue to develop the section so it is one that is an exciting, welcoming, and nurturing space. We want our members to feel the value of being a part of this community, and that passion comes through not only in our elected officers but also in the many members of the section who have volunteered in various ways throughout the year to make section activities possible, including organizing or being on section webinar or ASA meeting panels, serving on prize committees, or helping to plan the return of our beloved Development Conference in fall 2025. A section is only as great as its people and we know that this is no one's first job, so we deeply appreciate the time and love you give the section.

Now, here are two things I've been thinking about lately:

1 - Small Wins. I've been musing a lot lately on management scholar Therese Amabile's (Amabile & Kramer 2011) work on the power of small wins. She looked at several teams trying to solve difficult problems that required creativity, and asked them to fill out a diary entry every day for the duration of the project. She followed 238 people in 26 project teams within seven companies for several months, totaling almost 12k diary entries. She argues that while we fixate on big "aha!" leaps forward, progress is really dependent on a regular series of small wins. Those small wins are essential because they feed workers' motivations and help them feel a sense of a



positive work life. When people felt a positive work life, they were more creative and productive. In addition to experiencing small wins, a positive work life was also affected by whether they received help from coworkers or experienced encouragement or recognition. These things may seem simple, but having worked with lower-income public sector organizations (LIPSOs), I know that they are actually unfortunately rare. Many LIPSO workers are overwhelmed by the sense of all the structural factors conspiring against them making progress. They are frustrated by a very real lack of resources — e.g. a court that receives only one ream of paper for an entire year. They are typically more likely to experience anger and distrust from managers or the public than they are to experience gratitude and trust. I find myself thinking often about small wins and how we might think about doing development differently if we centered the needs of the everyday worker to feel competent, see small progress, experience support, and understand how their work was meaningful.

2 - Conditional Cooperation. I know that economists are not always popular with sociologists, but I find myself lately very captivated by the theory of conditional cooperation (Frey & Meier 2004; Gächter 2006) . In the 1970s there was rising recognition even among economists that human decisions regularly deviated from the ideal rational actor, but also deviated in patterned ways. This led to the incorporation of psychology and eventually into the creation of behavioral economics. Today, I see a similar pattern emerging, but as the twinkling of incorporating sociology into economic models of behavior, and that this is most clear in the research on conditional cooperation.

Today there is growing recognition, in both laboratory and field settings, that actors will deviate from personal economic rational decisions not only due to cognitive limitations or perceptual biases, but in response to what other people in their ask environment are doing. Economics has a regularly used lab experiment known as a public goods game. Generally, three people play in a group. Each person is given an amount of money that they may either keep for themselves or put into a common pool. The common pool of money is then multiplied by a particular number and then shared out to all three participants equally — regardless of how much each personally contributed. The baseline game is typically designed so it is economically rational to free-ride — keep your money for yourself and enjoy whatever free bonus from the common pool if others have contributed. But over many variations of the public goods games, sociology began to make its appearance. Researchers observed that while some players always contributed nothing, and a few people were always generous, curiously there was a rather large group in the middle whose willingness to donate depended on what they thought others would do. They were “conditional cooperators,” willing to cooperatively donate to the common pool if they thought



other people would do so as well. This was also born out in field settings: whether voluntary donations at museums or to maintaining scandinavian wildlife trails, information about how many other people were giving affected how some people contributed.

This strikes me as one of the more sociological insights in economics research, that what we are willing to do or how much we are willing to sacrifice can be affected by our beliefs or perceptions of what we expect most other people in our group to do. And I find it fascinating to see the commonalities across different field experiments around the world where economists find this rather large — typically about 40% of people — group of people. I think we see some similar things reflected in network theory or sociological research on bandwagon effects or social psychology research on group identification. But this work on conditional cooperation has done very little to look at the common sociological demographic categories that might be individual level predictors of conditional cooperation. Moreover, I find myself thinking over what more we could do to incorporate these insights into how we think about the sociology of development, both as a body of theory broadly but also at the level of individual projects or interventions into the human condition.



# Interview Series

**Nida Kirmani**

Associate Professor

Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan



**Can you please introduce yourself and your work?**

I am currently an Associate Professor of Sociology at the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) where I have been working for the past thirteen years. Before this, I was a Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham with the Religions and Development Research Programme (2007-2010). I completed my PhD from the University of Manchester in 2007, and I grew up in the US where I completed my undergraduate education from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. My PhD work was focused on a Muslim-majority locality in Delhi, Zakir Nagar, and I published



a monograph based on this research in 2013 with Routledge titled *Questioning 'the Muslim Women': Identity and Insecurity in an Urban Indian Locality*. I have also edited a volume on urban marginality in South Asia, *Marginalization, Contestation and Change in South Asian Cities* in 2021. I am currently completing a co-edited volume on gender studies in Pakistan, which will be published in the coming months. I helped establish the Gender and Sexuality Studies minor at our university, and I teach courses related to gender, development, urban studies and social movements. Apart from my academic work, I am a feminist public intellectual in Pakistan and regularly speak out in support of progressive struggles related to gender, human rights, and the issues being faced by marginalized communities in Pakistan.

### How have your interests and orientations as a scholar developed and changed over time?

My earlier work was focused on exploring the intersections between religious identity and gender firstly in the locality of Zakir Nagar in Delhi and subsequently exploring the ways in which women's movements in India and Pakistan approached the question of religion and Islam in particular. My PhD research in Zakir Nagar led me to the question of urban spatiality and marginalization based on religion, gender, class, ethnicity and caste. I carried this question with me when I moved to Pakistan in 2011, and it led me to my research in the area of Lyari where I conducted research for almost a decade beginning in 2012. Lyari is one of the oldest settlements in Karachi, which experienced several bouts of conflict from the early 2000s till 2015 between local criminal gangs, political parties and law enforcement agencies. My work in this area focused on how residents experienced various kinds of insecurity based on ethnicity, class and gender and how they navigate between state and non-state actors in their struggles for survival. I have also tried to move away from solely looking at Karachi through the lens of violence by exploring how young women in Lyari push gender boundaries through the pursuit of fun and leisure. Apart from publishing several journal articles and chapters based on this research, I have produced three short documentaries based on my research, which have been screened widely and have allowed me to share my work with a wider audience both within Pakistan and internationally.

Approximately half of Lyari's population are ethnically Baloch, and though most have lived in Karachi for generations, many residents still maintain ties with the province of Balochistan, which is the most marginalized and underdeveloped province in Pakistan. My connections with the Baloch community in Lyari led me to explore the issue of human rights in Balochistan more deeply. As someone who is very active on



the platform 'X' (previously Twitter), I noticed that many Baloch people were using this space as a platform to advocate for their rights, particularly on the issue of enforced disappearances. One of my recent publications deals with the question of how Baloch activists and family members of the disappeared are using 'X' as a space to assert their rights, and how this platform is both a space of hope and of peril for members of this community. My next project will focus on struggles for rights in Balochistan and will focus on how women in particular are emerging as leaders of the movement.

**It seems like you use a variety of methods in your work. Can you reflect on the process of doing fieldwork? Is there a method you gravitate towards? And if so, why?**

My research has always been qualitative in nature. My work in Zakir Nagar in Delhi and Lyari in Karachi was ethnographic — spending lots of time hanging out with folks to understand the complexity of their everyday lives. As both studies were focused on particular localities within the city, ethnography was the best way to understand the complexity of life in these areas. My research on social movements, whether the women's movements in India and Pakistan or the movements for human rights in Balochistan has relied more on interviews with activists along with participant observation at protests and observing online discourses. Like many other scholars in my field, some of my research has shifted to observing online spaces, particularly 'X' and Facebook and increasingly Instagram as activists are increasingly using these spaces to share their perspectives and mobilize support in the face of a media blackout. I am gradually moving away from ethnography as a method despite my continued belief in its value. This shift is partially a personal choice; ethnographic research is extremely time-consuming and emotionally-taxing, which is also reflected in the depth one is able to achieve through this method. For social movement studies, I find focused interviews more useful, but I also utilize digital ethnography and participant observation.

**What do you see as the role of Sociology in the study and practice of development? What unique perspective does Sociology have to contribute?**

While I am a sociologist, my interests and my work have always been interdisciplinary. I completed an MA in Development Studies from the University of Manchester. This led me to Sociology as a discipline, which funnily enough, I had never formally studied before my PhD. Over the years, I have become increasingly grateful for being located in Sociology, which has allowed me to explore the



questions I am most interested in — those related to gendered power dynamics and the experiences of marginalized groups in urban spaces. Sociology is capacious enough as a discipline to allow me to explore the intersections of multiple forms of social stratification through a combination of methods. For those interested in understanding the issues plaguing developing, postcolonial countries such as Pakistan and India, using a sociological lens allows the complexity of the social and historical dynamics that undergird current problems to emerge more clearly than other, more rigid and narrow disciplines.

### **What is the discipline of Sociology like in South Asia today? Are there some topics or methods that are receiving a lot of attention? Areas you think are neglected?**

While I cannot speak to all of South Asia, I can reflect on the situation in Pakistan. Unfortunately, Sociology in Pakistan is struggling as a discipline. This is largely a result of the decades-long neglect of public sector institutions in higher education where the vast majority of students in the country are studying. Most departments are under-staffed and under-budgeted, and much of the work coming out of these departments consists of poorly-conducted quantitative studies. Students in public sector universities are rarely exposed to contemporary theories and often lack guidance and supervision. This is a structural problem. The situation at our university, LUMS, is slightly better, but this is a private university with a relatively small student body. My colleagues in Sociology at LUMS are some of the most inspiring people I know and are conducting excellent research on a variety of social issues in Pakistan, but there is only so much we can do. For Sociology to really take off and develop as a discipline in Pakistan, we would need to see a lot more investment in public sector universities where the majority of students in the country are studying.

### **Can you reflect on your experience teaching Sociology?**

I have been teaching Sociology full-time for the past 13 years, and it has been extremely rewarding. From watching light bulbs switch on amongst first-year students in my Introduction to Sociology class to being able to delve deeply into subjects in upper-level courses such as 'Masculinities' and 'Gender and the City', I feel continuously challenged and rewarded as an educator. Certainly, teaching has changed drastically over the past few years as a result of social media and artificial intelligence. Students have shorter attention spans in Pakistan as is the case everywhere, which means we have to be increasingly creative as teachers just to hold their attention. However, they are also exposed to all sorts of new and ideas and content from around the globe, which has expanded their horizons and brought new ideas into our class discussions. Adapting to these changes is an ongoing challenge, but it keeps me on my toes for sure, which I appreciate.



# ● Dissertation Spotlight ●

**Sophia Boutilier**

Stony Brook University

## **The Struggle for Shared Struggle: Dilemmas of Privilege and Emotion in Building Solidarity**

This research introduces a new theoretical framework and an empirical case study to better understand how solidarity can connect groups across difference, rather than on the basis of common trait or experience. Specifically, I ask how privileged actors can find common ground with marginalized groups in the absence of self-interest or shared grievance. Through synthesis of literature in the fields of the sociology of emotions, critical race theory, social movement studies, and feminist theory, I find that emotions play important roles in the extent to which actors address their privilege to foster solidarity. From this premise, I conceptualize solidarity as a series of dilemmas that occur when privileged actors recognize their advantages and manage associated emotions. I group these dilemmas into four types: identification, interrelation, obligation, action. These involve recognizing and denaturalizing inequality; seeing privilege and oppression as part of a larger system; identifying advantages conferred by privilege; and redistributing advantages through direct reparations and challenging oppressive systems.

To complement the framework, empirical data were collected from interviews with 42 development workers from Global Affairs Canada (and its predecessor, the Canadian International Development Agency). This case was selected due to participants' (1) privileged positions, (2) routine engagement with inequality, (3) institutional comparability, and (4) organization's public commitment to international solidarity. I find that workers worry about inequality and feel guilty about their privilege, but also take comfort in the reward of "making a difference" and leveraging their privileged positions. Nevertheless, the incompatibility of development objectives and geopolitical priorities proves highly frustrating. To manage this tension, some lean into their positions as civil servants, easing the conflict by seeing themselves as accountable to Canadians first and foremost. Others, who feel more accountable to solidarity with international partners, are much more likely to experience burnout and compromised career prospects.

In addition to the emotional valences of solidarity, building an ethical consensus around the term proves fraught. Most workers are uncertain about how to define



solidarity and only a minority identify addressing power imbalances to meaningfully redress inequalities. Despite public declarations that solidarity is a “shared Canadian value,” workers lack a cohesive vision through which to enact solidarity with partners in the global South. The term resonates with some workers individually but proves an empty signifier at the organizational level. These findings demonstrate the importance of institutional leadership to give solidarity teeth in the practice of development work.

As a whole, the dissertation provides a roadmap for solidarity that challenges privilege, demonstrating both obstacles and opportunities to stand with others. It introduces new conceptual and empirical understandings of the conditions necessary for collective commitments. The study concludes with policy implications, recommendations for further research, emergent paradoxes of solidarity, and reflections on perspective changes as a result of this work.

Articles from the research can be found in *Sociology of Development* (2022) and the *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* (forthcoming).

**Idowu Alabi**

Wayne State University

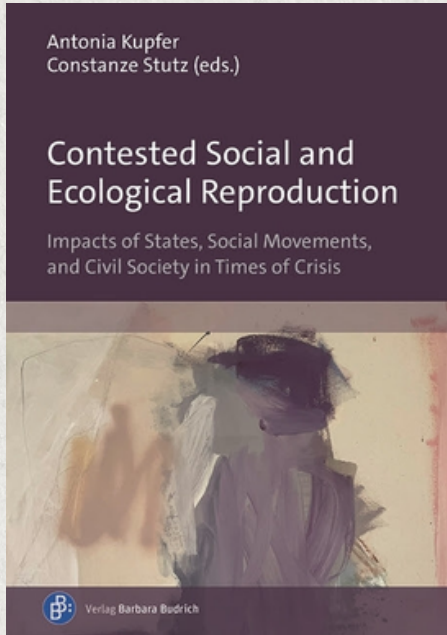
**Gender and the Socio-Political Ecology of Shea Resource Use and Management in Nigeria: A Sequential Mixed-Method Study**

The African Shea tree is a forest resource that provides generational socio-cultural capital and livelihoods for millions of women and their communities. However, massive deforestation of this resource threatens their livelihoods and the biodiversity resilience of these communities. Although scholarship has primarily focused on local production and global commodification of these forest resources, the impact of multilevel actors on Shea tree deforestation remains unclear. My project will use a sequential mixed-method approach, combining findings from in-depth interviews and ethnographic surveys to explore how socio-cultural processes and state and non-state management politics intersect to create gendered outcomes in Shea tree resource use and management. I will compare how socio-economic and ecological values and perceptions of women's involvement in resource management decisions vary among Shea resource users, state and non-state representatives, and community members. Insights from this study will broaden the scope of empirical debate on gender and forest resources in the Global South. By adopting a feminist political ecology lens, this work will provide broader theoretical insights into the cultural context of forest resource use and management. Moreover, the study will be vital for policymakers, local leaders, and development practitioners to promote gender inclusivity in forest resource management.



# New/Forthcoming Publications

## Books

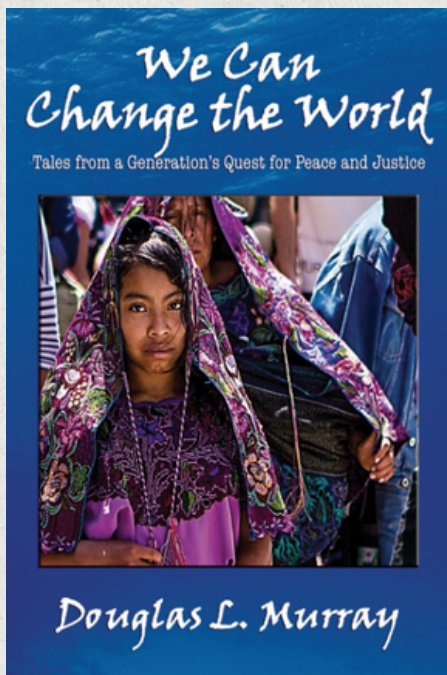


### Contested Social and Ecological Reproduction: Impacts of States, Social Movements, and Civil Society in Times of Crisis

Edited by Antonia Kupfer and Constanze Stutz  
June 2024

Verlag Barbara Budrich, distributed by Columbia University Press

Humanity has not succeeded in securing the basis of life for all people. A major reason is the dominant global capitalist economy, which is based on the exploitation and use of nature — but this state of affairs is not accepted by everyone. This book provides a close socio-analytical look at how states, social movements, and civil society actors deal with this polycrisis. The book concludes with an interview with Nancy Fraser about 'Cannibal Capitalism'



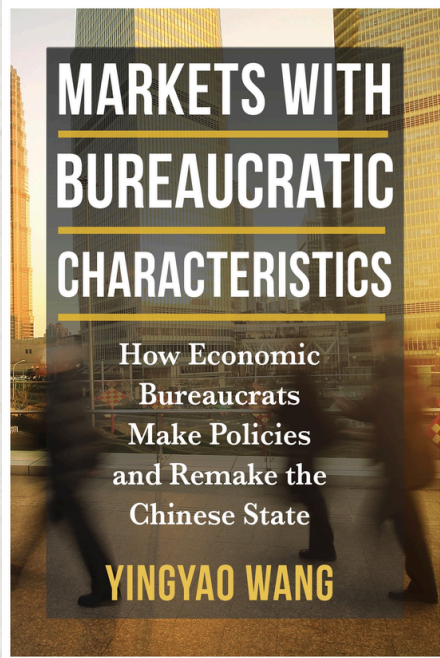
### We Can Change the World: Tales from a Generation's Quest for Peace and Justice

Douglas L. Murray  
March 2024

Ideas into Books: Westview

A hemispheric sojourn from Santiago, Chile to Ottawa, Canada, *We Can Change the World* captures the passions and motivations of largely unknown actors through the civil rights, anti-Vietnam War and Women's Liberation movements, the Cuban and Nicaraguan Revolutions, the Chilean Coup, the Salvadoran civil war, the South Africa anti-apartheid campaign, the struggle for Mayan cultural survival, human rights initiatives, and more. *We Can Change the World* is both homage and cautionary tale, bringing to life everyday people engaged in extra-ordinary acts, some noble and worthy of celebration, others tragically misguided. It is a unique revisiting of many of the defining moments of our times.

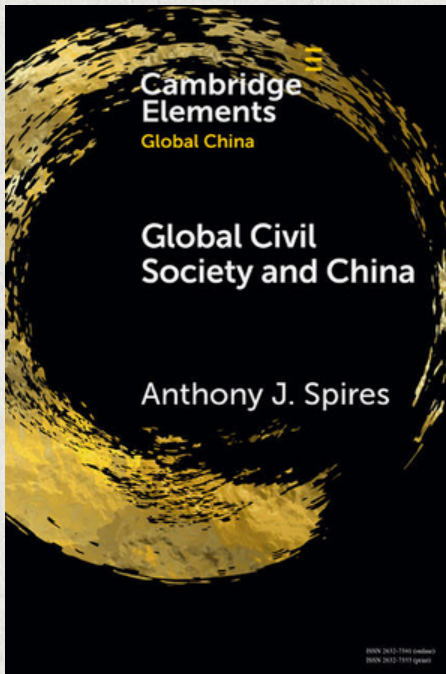




## Markets with Bureaucratic Characteristics: How Economic Bureaucrats Make Policies and Remake the Chinese State

Yingyao Wang  
May 2024  
Columbia University Press

- Offers a major contribution to our knowledge of economic policymaking in post-Mao China.
- Shows how bureaucrats have transformed China's economic policy from within.
- Spurred by competition and careerism, second-tier economic bureaucrats instituted distinctive policy paradigms to secure their standing and, in the process, rewrote China's long-term development plans for their own benefit.
- Drawing on fine-grained biographical and interview data, the author traces how officials coalesced around shared career trajectories, generational experiences, and social networks to create new alliances and rivalries.



## Global Civil Society and China

Anthony Spires  
Apr 2024  
Cambridge University Press

This short book traces the history of and recent developments in the unstable relationship between global civil society (GCS) and China. It analyses the normative impacts GCS has had on China – including the Chinese state and domestic civil society – and the possibilities created by Beijing's new 'going out' policies for Chinese civil society groups. It examines the rhetoric and reality of GCS as an emancipatory project and argues that 'universal values' underpinned by principles of human rights and democracy have gained currency in China despite official resistance from the government. It argues that while the Chinese party-state is keen to benefit from GCS engagement, Beijing is also determined to minimize any impact outside groups might have on regime security. The book concludes with some observations about future research directions and the internationalization of Chinese civil society.



## Articles

Huang, Xiaorui. 2024. "Harness the Co-Benefit and Avoid the Trade-off: The Complex Relationship between Income Inequality and Carbon Dioxide Emission." *Social Forces*.

Huang, Xiaorui. 2024. "Not All Emissions Are Created Equal: Multidimensionality in Nations' Greenhouse Gas Emissions and the Affluence/Emissions Nexus." *Socius* 10.

Suchyta, Mark, Thomas Dietz, and Kenneth A. Frank. 2024. "Cross-National Social and Environmental Influences on Life Satisfaction." *Social Forces*.

Chang, Andy Scott. 2024. "Masculinity on the Margins: Boundary Work among Immobile Fathers in Indonesia's Transnational Families." *Social Forces* 102(3): 1048-1067.

## Annual Meeting Information

The 2024 Annual Meeting will be held in Montréal on **August 9-13, 2024**. Based on the routine rotation of sections, our Sociology of Development day is Tuesday, August 13.

### Regular Session: Development

Organizer: Holly Reed

### Regular Session: Gender & Development

Organizer: Isabel Pike

### Section Session: Learning from What Works in Development

Organizer: Erin McDonnell

Often sociology focuses on illuminating social problems in the world, which is enormously important. But sociology can also contribute to helping us find answers to those social problems by identifying the conditions under which some policies, programs, partnerships, or other social arrangements work better than others. Where are the "bright spots" in development, where despite considerable challenges, things are going relatively well? What can we learn, of both theoretical and practical importance, from such examples?



## **Section Session: Knowing Crises: How are Ecological and Human Health Crises Understood, Framed, and Addressed?**

Organizers: Jonathan Shaffer & Jennifer Lai

Sociology has long been concerned with investigating the social drivers that pattern illness and injustice in human health around the world. Similarly, rapidly expanding sociological research on the human-drivers of the environment and climate change have shaped interpretations of social action in response to accelerating locally-experienced ecological threats particularly in the developing world. This panel seeks papers that empirically and/or theoretically engage with the social production of ways of knowing – understanding, framing, and intervening on – the imbricated crises of the environment and human health. We're particularly interested in papers that explore the many tensions that such ways of knowing unveil: between local and global narratives, between ascriptions of agency between human and non-human systems, between interventions focused on the collective/political and technical, and many others.

## **Section Session: Sociology of Development Open Topic Session**

Organizer: Luiz Vilça

This session honors the Sociology of Development section's commitment to intellectual inclusivity and breadth, which is written into our bylaws. This session is open to all methodological and theoretical traditions, welcoming work that is theoretical, empirical or both.

## **Section on the Sociology of Development Roundtables**

Organizer: Andy Chang





## **Sociology of Development Section Book Award**

Chair: Heidi Racemacher

### **Winner:**

Jenny Trinitapoli. 2023. *An Epidemic of Uncertainty: Navigating HIV and Young Adulthood in Malawi*. University of Chicago Press

### **Honorable Mention:**

Elena Shih. 2023. *Manufacturing Freedom: Sex Work, Anti-Trafficking Rehab, and the Racial Wages of Rescue*. University of California Press

## **Sociology of Development Section Faculty Article Award**

Chair: Sasha White

### **Winner:**

Christy Thornton 2023 "Developmentalism as Internationalism Toward a Global Historical Sociology of the Origins of the Development Project" *Sociology of Development*

### **Honorable Mention:**

Masoud Movahed 2023 "Varieties of capitalism and income inequality" *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*

## **Sociology of Development Section Graduate Student Paper Award**

Chair: Jennifer Givens

### **Winner:**

Lívio Silva-Muller "Coupling the Environmental State: Global Climate Politics in the Amazon Rainforest"

### **Honorable Mentions:**

Tracy Fehr "Nepal's Post-Earthquake Development Surge: The Unintended Local Impacts of Reconstruction"

Priyam Saraf "Interpreting Commerce and Care: A Comparative Ethnography of Garment Firms in Bangladesh"



# Announcements

## Call for Applications — Sectors Co-Editor (2024-2026)

The Sociology of Development section is seeking two co-editors for our newsletter, Sectors. This is a great opportunity for a junior scholar or graduate student to get more involved with the section and its diverse members.

The new Sectors co-editor will have a two-year term from September 2024 to July 2026. They will work with current co-editor/s to collaboratively shape the content and format of the newsletter. They will seek out and develop original content and maintain regular features.

### Qualifications:

- Strong organizational skills, including ability to meet deadlines
- Strong written communication skills
- Graduate students are welcome and encouraged to apply

Please submit a one-page CV to: [socdevsectors@gmail.com](mailto:socdevsectors@gmail.com). Application review begins on Sept 30 and continues on a rolling basis until the position is filled.



## MISSION STATEMENT

The Sociology of Development Section of ASA promotes work in sociology on the causes and effects of development. We support work in all geographical regions including the United States, other advanced industrial nations and the Global South. We are open to work of all theoretical orientations and all methodological orientations. Both theoretical and applied work is welcome.

## SECTION COMMUNICATION PLATFORMS

### **ASA Sociology of Development Page:**

<http://www.asanet.org/sections/development.cfm>

### **Sociology of Development Website:**

<http://sociologyofdevelopment.com/>

### **Sociology of Development Newsletter:**

Please send all your ideas, feedback, and submissions to [socdevsectors@gmail.com](mailto:socdevsectors@gmail.com).