SECTORS

Newsletter of the American Sociological Association's Sociology of Development Section

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Message from the Chair

Joseph Harris

Associate Professor of
Sociology at Boston University

Chair of the ASA Section on the
Sociology of Development



I am excited to join the wonderful and thoughtful team of scholars that comprise our Section Council and to work with them to carry forward the work and activities of our vibrant section this year. I first want to acknowledge the exemplary leadership of immediate past Section Chair Brian Dill and many fabulous contributions of our outgoing Council Members, which include past Section Chair Monica Prasad, Council Members Heidi Rademacher, Holly Reed, and Sebastián Rojas Cabal. I would also like to welcome incoming Section Chair Diana Graizbord and Council Members Rebekah Burraway, Rahadhika Utama, and Yunhan Wen. And a note of extraordinary thanks to our outgoing newsletter editor Sebastián Rojas Cabal and current newsletter editor Yuanhang Zhu!

We have an exciting year of events ahead! First, put **May 6-8, 2027 in Boston on your calendars for the section's next Sociology of Development meeting**! The Organizing Committee of Sarah Babb, Patrick Heller, Jason Jackson, Val Moghadem, Liza Weinstein, Anjuli Fahlberg, Jocelyn Viterna, and myself are excited to host you here in Boston. Look for our call for abstracts in the month ahead.

SocDev 2027 is going to be great. But still, that's just one event. There's a lot of time between now and then and a lot more our section can offer and be beyond a great annual conference. What are my hopes for our section? What do I hope it be? Above all, our section is what we make it, a community of our own making:

A community, built around research ideas and interests you care about most. A community that offers us the chance to expand our networks and broaden our perspectives through meeting others and learning from the genuinely different ways we each approach empirical problems, theory, and research and teaching more generally. A community that provides the opportunity to grow and be nourished regularly through the sharing of perspectives and exchange of knowledge and publications.

A place where your publications, achievements, milestones, and contributions are shared and recognized. A space for events –physical, virtual, and hybrid – where you get to share and receive feedback on your work. A site for mentorship and menteeship, discovery and exploration. A site for learning about jobs, postdocs, public engagement opportunities, fellowships, grants, calls for abstracts and papers, and conferences.

A venue for service and the professional development experience that comes through those engagements. A forum for discussion, debate, and growth about challenges facing our discipline and the world. A place for experimentation, where the practitioner and scholarly worlds come together and have generative and meaningful conversations. And a place to connect with others when the world is on fire.

This is what I hope most for from our section this year. With your engagement, participation, and ideas our section can be a vibrant community full of energy and vitality that provides regular sustenance and vitality throughout the year.

- Want to organize a virtual or hybrid Development event during the academic year, or share with section members a virtual or hybrid development related event going on at your institution or in the world? **Email me at socdevchair@gmail.com.**
- Want to workshop a paper virtually? **Email me at socdevchair@gmail.com.**
- Want to host a virtual mentoring or professional development event? **Email me at socdevchair@gmail.com.**
- Want to heighten your profile in the section while at the same time contributing to the ongoing work we are doing? We are currently looking for volunteers to serve on this year's Faculty Article Award and Graduate Student Article Award Committees (most of this work takes place in the Spring)? **Email me if you are interested in volunteering at socdevchair@gmail.com.**
- Want to run for Council? **Email me at socdevchair@gmail.com.**
- Have announcements—including calls for papers, grants, fellowships, jobs, conferences, or publications—to include in Section emails? **Email me at socdevchair@gmail.com.**

We don't need to wait for SocDev in May or ASA in August to get together! We can do it right now. Let's do this!

Interviews with 2026 Newly Elected Officers



Rahardhika Utama
Council Member

Could you please introduce yourself?

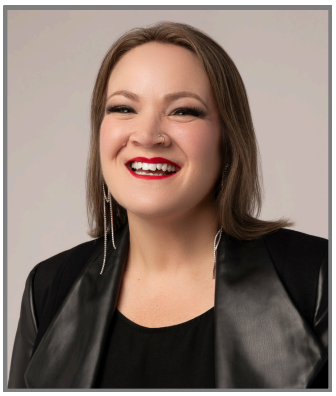
I am a sociologist and data scientist who works across two complementary research tracks. As an applied researcher, I study oncology care gaps, using real-world data and analytics to show where patients fall out of timely, equitable care and what health systems can do about it. As an academic, I pursue comparative-historical research on inequality, corruption, decentralization, social movements, and democratic backsliding, drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and archival analysis. I hold appointments at Northwestern's Equality Development and Globalization Studies and the Atma Jaya Institute of Public Policy. I also founded the CORE program at the Johns Hopkins Center on Global Poverty, a platform that turns social science into tools for policymakers and practitioners. Across both tracks, I aim to produce rigorous analysis that informs decisions and improves outcomes.

What motivated you to take on this leadership role for the section?

I sought this role to strengthen research-policy translation and widen the real-world impact of sociological research. Valuable findings too often remain within academic circles rather than reaching those who shape practice.

Could you share a brief update on your current research or a project you are excited about in development studies?

I am currently collaborating on a project on democratic backsliding in Southeast Asia and the role of youth social movements in responding to it. The work asks how young people mobilize as political institutions weaken, what conditions allow their movements to endure, and how outside actors can support them without undermining their autonomy. I am especially interested in how civic space, political opportunity, and organizational resources shape what young activists can accomplish. My hope is that the project will produce evidence useful to both scholars and the practitioners who work alongside youth-led movements to sustain healthy civic space and strengthen democratic resilience.



Rebekah Burroway
Council Member

Could you please introduce yourself?

I am an Associate Professor of Sociology at Stony Brook University. In one line of research, I use cross-national, quantitative methods to examine the impact of social structural forces on global health, with an emphasis on women and children.

I am especially interested in measuring women's empowerment in a cross-national context and evaluating the impact that gender inequality has on families and societies. What does "empowerment" mean, how does it work, and how do we know it when we see it? In a second and newly emerging line of research, I use qualitative methods to understand how beauty standards are created, how and why they change over time, and how beauty ideals and practices affect people.

What motivated you to take on this leadership role for the section?

This section has been so good to me, ever since I was a graduate student. I'm delighted to have the opportunity to give back to it!



Yunhan Wen

Student Representative

Yunhan Wen is a Postgraduate Research Associate at Princeton University, where she earned her Ph.D. in Sociology in 2026. Her research examines how states pursue and are reshaped by economic transformation. Drawing on ethnographic and archival research in Shanghai and Shenzhen, her book project explains how China has managed conflicts over land during rapid urbanization. Her new project studies China's data-center expansion, combining national dataset construction with comparative fieldwork to examine its political and distributive consequences.

What motivated you to take on this leadership role for the section?

Organizing SocDev2026 motivated me to take on a leadership role in the section. The work was demanding, and I could not have done it without my co-organizer, Livio Silva-Muller, and the generous support of senior section members. However, it was extremely rewarding to see scholars studying development in different parts of the world exchange ideas and build a sense of community. It showed me what thoughtful organizing can make possible, and I want to continue creating spaces for intellectual exchange within the section. Having recently defended my dissertation, I also know firsthand how valuable sustained, constructive feedback on papers in progress is to junior scholars. As student representative, I hope to create more opportunities for that kind of engagement.

Could you share a brief update on your current research or a project you are excited about in development studies?

I'm revising my dissertation into a book, which asks how China sustained rapid urbanization despite widespread conflicts over rural land. Comparing Shanghai and Shenzhen, I examine how local governments and landholding communities negotiated development and how those arrangements shaped political authority. I'm also collecting preliminary data for a new project on China's data-center expansion. The project asks how a national strategy for technology-led growth takes shape locally, who benefits and who bears the costs, and whether artificial intelligence's material demands—a constant supply of electricity, abundant water for cooling, and reliable fiber connections between computing hubs and centers of demand—test the limits of "directed improvisation" (Ang 2016) that has long been the backbone of China's developmental strategy.

2026 Sociology of Development Section Award Winners

Sociology of Development Section Book Award

Utku Balaban, Industrial Islamism: How Authoritarian Movements Mobilize Workers. University of California Press, 2025

Kerilyn Schewel, Moved by Modernity: How Development Shapes Migration in Rural Ethiopia. Oxford University Press, 2025

Sociology of Development Section Faculty Article Award

Marco Garrido. 2025. "A thousand years of corruption: a history of corruption and anti-corruption in the Philippines since 1946." Comparative Studies in Society and History. 67(3): 595-621.

Jin Sun and Gregoire Mallard. 2025. "Post-neoliberal parallel globalization: the unipolar to multipolar transition in transnational financial orders." Socio-Economic Review.

Sociology of Development Section Graduate Student Paper Award

Winner: **Rohan Advani**, "Banking on the Ruins of Empire: Developing Global Finance in Kuwait and Singapore."

Honorable Mention: **Andrea Zhu**, "Something New, Something Borrowed: Chinese State Capital and Mekong Dams in a Historical Lineage of Development (1954–2025)."

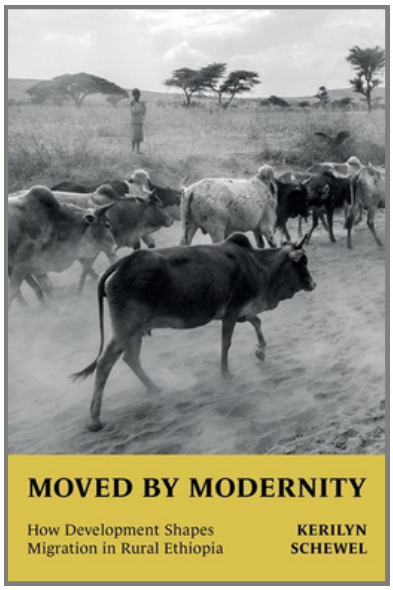
Interviews with Award Winners



Kerilyn Schewel

Sociology of Development Section
Book Award

Kerilyn Schewel is an assistant professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her research examines the root causes of human migration and immobility, with an emphasis on the themes of gender, youth, education, rural development, and climate change. She has carried out extensive qualitative and mixed-methods fieldwork in East Africa.



Moved by Modernity: How Development Shapes Migration in Rural Ethiopia
Oxford University Press, 2025

What was the core inspiration behind this award-winning work? Could you share a brief story about its development?

When I first arrived in Wayisso, a small farming village in Ethiopia's Rift Valley, in 2015, I had one deceptively simple question: why are people leaving? Ethiopia had one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, and more and more people were leaving villages like this one. They went to neighboring towns, to cities across the country, and increasingly abroad, including young women going to the Gulf to work as domestic workers. I expected to find the story we usually tell about migration from poor rural places: people pushed out by poverty, drought, or land scarcity.

I found a very different reality. Those "push factors" were very real, but they weren't pushing people out. They were holding them in place. The poorest families, including the ones hit hardest by the 2015 drought, often told me they felt trapped in the village. The people leaving were the better educated and better connected, and they were motivated by a deep desire to "change their lives"--through schooling, salaried work, starting a business, or building a home in town. The "good life," almost everyone explained, was no longer a rural one.

I realized Wayisso had an important lesson for how we think about the relationship between migration and development. Across many countries, international migration rises as countries grow richer, at least until they reach middle-income levels. Researchers call this the mobility transition. Existing research offers partial explanations: rising incomes and thus less financial constraints on migration; rising educational attainment and the college-educated are the most prone to migrate;

or the displacement of rural livelihoods that follows capitalist expansion. Each explanation addresses one piece of the puzzle, but nobody had really shown how these forces come together in people's actual lives. So I chose to go deep rather than wide. I combined historical records, household surveys, interviews, and ethnography to trace how one village's relationship to the state, the market, schooling, foreign investment, and the land changed over four generations, as their livelihoods shifted from pastoralism to farming to urban work. The book addresses structural change, but its emphasis is on the force of changing aspirations that reshape migration decision-making and how people experience immobility.

How does this work connect to your future research trajectory?

The book ends with a question I couldn't answer in Wayisso: what would it take for rural places to be somewhere young people can build a good life, rather than somewhere they have to leave to live well? In Wayisso, progress had become almost synonymous with leaving. But that isn't inevitable. I suspect it partly reflects the village's particular history, in which farming and settlement was imposed on a semi-nomadic community only a few generations ago. Other rural communities show much stronger place attachment and much more voluntary staying.

My next project, Progressing in Place, addresses this question in rural Kenya. This time, I want to examine how migration can strengthen a community's capability to stay. That means taking the community seriously as a social unit, not just as a backdrop to individual or household decisions. Migrants' money, skills, networks, and ideas can drain a place, or they can be channeled into collective investments that make staying a real and desirable option for those who remain. I want to understand the conditions under which the second happens.

The project is also methodologically different for me. I'm working in partnership with a community-based organization in western Kenya, using community-engaged methods in which residents help shape the questions, interpret the findings, and decide how the knowledge is used. This organization has worked in village development for two decades, and is predominantly youth-led. I'm eager to learn from and with them.

Alongside that project, I am co-editing a book called 'Development in Transition: Rethinking Rural Futures' with Benjamin P. Davis and D. Lee Miller, the first volume from Pivot Press. It brings scholars and practitioners together to treat rural places not as problems to be solved but as sites of experimentation in education, livelihoods, migration, and resilience. It takes up the question at the center of all my work: how development might enhance, rather than erode, people's capability to flourish where they are.

What brief piece of advice would you offer to junior scholars and graduate students doing research in the sociology of development today?

Stay open and close to the ground long enough for it to surprise you. I went to Wayisso with what I thought was a simple question--why are people leaving?--and the answers I found turned my initial assumptions upside down. In particular, I began this project wanting to challenge economic explanations of migration, and I ended up having to reckon with how much they do explain in a world where more and more of life can be bought and sold. (See my chapter 5 on the market to see how I wrestled with this!) Particularly if you do qualitative work, hold your theories and assumptions loosely.



Marco Z. Garrido

Sociology of Development Section
Faculty Article Award

Marco Z. Garrido is an associate professor in sociology at the University of Chicago. He is the author of The Patchwork City: Class, Space, and Politics in Metro Manila. He is currently wrapping up a second book titled Bad Words: Corruption, Politics, and the Politics of Knowledge and beginning work on a third, an ethnography of democracy in the Philippines.

What was the core inspiration behind this award-winning work? Could you share a brief story about its development?

My CSSH paper "One Thousand Years of Corruption: A History of Corruption and Anti-corruption in the Philippines since 1946" began with an interest in the corruption-mindedness of Filipinos: the sense that corruption was everywhere and constituted the biggest problem facing the country not just politically but socially. The argument in my head remained vague, however. It needed something to ground it, to give it shape. I found this something rummaging through the shelves of Popular Bookstore in Timog, Quezon City: a four-volume chronicle by Maria Felisa Syjuco Tan called Highlights of Philippine History. It consisted of succinct descriptions of significant political events in the country, year by year, from the Second World War through the end of Fidel Ramos' presidential term (1941-1998). Each volume concluded with a section called "Newsbreakers" listing political scandals, international events held in the country (including every beauty pageant, naturally), natural disasters, sensational crimes and notorious individuals, and "unusual phenomena" usually involving apparitions of the Virgin Mary. I used the chronicle to make a table of major corruption scandals in the country from its independence in 1946 through the election of Bongbong Marcos in 2022.



This simple act of organization proved revelatory. On the face of it, the sheer number of scandals attending every administration seemed to support the view that corruption was endemic to the Philippines. Upon closer inspection, however, it became clear that the "corruption" at issue in different times was not the same thing. The scandals revolved around some moral transgression, sure, but the nature of that transgression, and whether or not it actually broke any laws or formal rules, varied considerably across time.

For instance, the extravagant wedding of Ferdinand Marcos' daughter Irene in 1983 (entailing the remodeling of an entire town) caused more of a scandal than the malversation of public funds through the Coconut Levy in 1981. Why? Because, as I argue in the paper, that particular moment in 1983 was ripe for outrage. For me, the particular discovery was that corruption is not one thing, objective and immutable, but "a moving object" and impossible to understand outside of the social and historical context giving it meaning.

Making the table—and through it being able to see both the persistence and variability of corruption over the country's history—catalyzed a process of conceptual mitosis. The idea of corruption as a moving object became "One Thousand Years" and the idea of corruption-mindedness a separate paper. As I worked out these ideas, it became clear to me that corruption was more than just a moral problem. It was an epistemic one, meaning that it involved, crucially, knowledge of what constituted appropriate conduct. The origins of this knowledge in the historical experience of Western countries had been effaced, however, and a particular way of doing things promulgated as a universal standard. For people on the ground in the Philippines and other late modernizing countries, who found they had to engage in corruption simply in order to get things done, the result was a bad conscience: a sense that one is doing things the wrong way—and the fervent, desperate wish to do them the right way. Before I knew it, a book was emerging.

How does this work connect to your future research trajectory?

As I explain above, writing this paper led to writing other papers tackling different aspects of the same topic until finally a whole book began to take shape.

What brief piece of advice would you offer to junior scholars and graduate students doing research in the sociology of development today?

Go beyond the development literature. Look into how this scholarship is received on the ground: how people understand it, the debates surrounding it, the structures--material and symbolic--imbuing it with power. Don't simply take for granted that there is only one "right" way to develop or modernize, but, rather, question whether the dominant way, even what we think of as the moral way, is truly appropriate or even realistic given the situation on the ground.



Grégoire Mallard

Sociology of Development Section
Faculty Article Award

Grégoire Mallard is Professor in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the Geneva Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, where has held the position of Director of Research for 6 years (2020-2026).

What was the core inspiration behind this award-winning work? Could you share a brief story about its development?

From 2017 until 2022, Grégoire Mallard has lead an ERC project titled Bombs, Banks and Sanctions, which focused on the evolution of unilateral sanctions in the global context of the Iran nuclear negotiations and global banking reforms, from which he cocreated with Erica Moret the Geneva Sanctions and Sustainable Peace Hub (2022-2026). Together with Jin Sun, he has coauthored a number of publications from that project, which continue to this day.

How does this work connect to your future research trajectory?

Together with documentary makers Thomas Isler and Ariane Lüthi, Grégoire Mallard and Erica Moret are now writing a documentary 'Sanctioned Lives', funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, which will build on their research on sanctions.

What brief piece of advice would you offer to junior scholars and graduate students doing research in the sociology of development today?

The value of the collective research and writing that I conducted as part of a team when I was a PhD student is becoming increasingly clear to me as I grow in academic age, so gaining this experience as early as possible can only help younger researchers gain confidence in one's abilities to generate new ideas and develop new projects from beginning to end.



Rohan Advani

Sociology of Development
Graduate Student Paper Award

Rohan Advani is a Junior Research Fellow at the Crown Center for Middle East Studies at Brandeis University and holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of California, Los Angeles. His current book project is a comparative study of sovereign wealth funds in Abu Dhabi and Singapore, examining how states integrate into global financial markets, how they use the tools of global finance for state-led development, and the elites that oversee these processes.

What was the core inspiration behind this award-winning work? Could you share a brief story about its development?

Following several years working on and living in the Middle East, I came to graduate school with the idea of studying finance in the Persian Gulf. Oil had transformed the development of the region, but we didn't know too much about the financial infrastructure and institutions developed to absorb this capital, recycle it, and underwrite its economic transformation. However, taking classes in the sociology of development at UCLA introduced me to the

entire literature on the developmental state in East Asia. It dawned on me that both regions had experienced "miracles" (albeit of a entirely different kind) and taking seriously the tradition of comparative-historical sociology, I thought, "why don't we put these regions in conversation with one another?" It was also born of a frustration that similar processes in both regions were marked by entirely different labels: good old "business-state relations" in Taiwan was "crony capitalism" in Egypt or Saudi Arabia. I figured that if we studied these regions together, we might get closer to overcoming unnecessary parochialism and resist exceptionalist framings of these respective regions. Maybe the "developmental state" and the "rentier state" were not as different as we may have imagined? It seemed to me that finance was the way to think through the development of these regions, and in doing so, I tried to make the point that "finance" was not antithetical to "development," as is sometimes implied. I don't know to what extent I succeeded in doing that, but I hope to start some sort of conversation about it!

How does this work connect to your future research trajectory?

My current research project is about sovereign wealth funds (SWFs) and how states use these funds for development purposes (among other things). Again, I think that sociologists of development really have to take seriously financialization, not as something that is necessarily antithetical to development, but something that changes the nature of development, whether we like it or not. My two cases studies are Singapore's Temasek Holdings and Abu Dhabi's Mubadala Investment Company, so I'm continuing with the type of comparison I outlined earlier. And with countries all over the world wanting to establish their own SWFs (even here in the United States!) to project aspirations of renewed control and sovereignty amid deepening uncertainty, it's worth looking at existing models in order to understand what happens when traditional functions of the state (fiscal capacity, development, elite legitimacy) fall into the domain of global finance.



What brief piece of advice would you offer to junior scholars and graduate students doing research in the sociology of development today?

I can only really offer advice to graduate students, but I would say that this is a really great time to study the sociology of development! With renewed attempts at industrial policy, increasing state intervention in the economy, changing monetary orders, financial planning back on the table, and the explosion of new industries (renewables, AI, etc.), it's an exciting time to study the world, however precarious and scary things are. But, echoing Andrew Schrank, we can't afford to marginalize this to the sociology of development — we have to find ways to bring our insights to more "mainstream" sections. In the meantime, I'd also encourage graduate students to continue to read widely, place far flung regions in comparison with one another, and make the case for why studying contemporary Armenia (just as an example) is actually really important! Sociologists studying the US never really have to justify their cases the way those of us who study the Global South do, but I think this is basically a 'good' problem to have, however frustrating. Getting into the habit of case justification only strengthens our projects and keeps a check on unnecessary siloing.

2026 Dissertation Spotlight



Xiaoting Lu

xl2mkx@virginia.edu

Xiaoting Lu is a Ph.D. Candidate in Sociology at the University of Virginia. She studies finance, state-market relations, and the digital economy, with a focus on China and comparative capitalism.

Rewiring the Frontier: The Remaking of Finance and Technology in China

Building on a classic tradition in the sociology of development linking financial systems to developmental trajectories, my dissertation examines the co-evolution of China's growth model and financial system. Over recent decades, China has pursued two intertwined transformations: a shift from debt-and investment-led growth toward innovation-led development, and a reorganization of finance from bank-dominated credit allocation toward a more diversified, market-mediated, and state-steered financial architecture. My dissertation asks how changing developmental priorities reshape the institutions and instruments through which capital is mobilized and coordinated, and how these financial architectures in turn shape the direction and risks of growth-model change.

Drawing on policy archives, financial data, interviews, and text analysis, this project brings together three studies of China's changing finance–development nexus. The first examines developmental finance as a distinct form of financialization from its neoliberal counterpart, showing how transitional risk is redistributed across the state, financial institutions, and firms, increasingly through state capital and equity-based mechanisms. The second traces how policymakers and financial experts classified different forms of finance according to their contributions to the "real economy," revealing how ideas of efficiency, productivity, and risk informed reform priorities. The third examines how equity-based finance, with its distinctive forms of valuation, ownership, and risk-bearing, connected financial reform to new sector formation and industrial transformation differently from credit-based finance.

Together, these studies show that finance serves as a developmental infrastructure through which late-developing and state-capitalist economies organize industrial upgrading, govern uncertainty, and renegotiate relations among public authority, private capital, and firms.



Yue Xu

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Yue Xu is a PhD candidate in Sociology at Colorado State University. Yue's research focuses on rural sociology, agrifood systems, fisheries and marine governance. Her dissertation examines China's seafood regime across production, processing, and consumption, shedding light on the hidden human, social, cultural, and environmental costs of rural development. Through this work, she offers a critical rethinking of state-led capital accumulation from the perspective of marginalized communities.

State, Capital, and the Sea: State-Led Accumulation, Dispossession, and the Politics of Crisis in China's Emerging Seafood Regime

Drawing on ethnographic research and interviews conducted in the Zhoushan Islands, China, between 2019 and 2025, this study adopts a food regime approach to examine China's seafood regime across production, processing, and consumption. On the production side, it focuses on distant-water fisheries and aquaculture. Using distant-water fisheries and marine ranching as cases, the study shows how the state-backed expanding pelagic imperial regime creates new frontiers of accumulation by displacing small-scale capture fishers, restructuring coastal production and processing, and extending resource grabbing to overseas waters and the ecologically sensitive Antarctic. Through aquaculture, it traces the circulation of land- and marine-based feed resources shaped by state policy, declining fisheries stocks, and global competition. Together, these cases show how China's seafood regime extends new frontiers of accumulation at sea under the Maritime Power Strategy and Food Security agenda.

Beyond production, the study examines how modernization of the seafood processing industry and changing domestic and overseas consumption markets reconfigure rural development and livelihoods in an authoritarian context. It argues that marine resource extraction, value-added processing, and domestic and global markets have become increasingly integrated within a "grain-feed-aquatic complex." While these transformations create opportunities for industrial upgrading and rural development, they also generate uneven outcomes as artificial intelligence technologies and digital infrastructure drive another round of agrarian knowledge production.

By linking seafood production, processing, and consumption, this study contributes to post-neoliberal food regime scholarship by showing how state capitalism and hybrid state-capital formations reconfigure agrifood resource distribution, reshape rural development, and advance neo-extractivism globally.



Rohan Advani

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Junior Research Fellow at the Crown Center for Middle East Studies at Brandeis University

Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of California, Los Angeles

Development Returns: Sovereign Wealth Funds and the Politics of State Investment

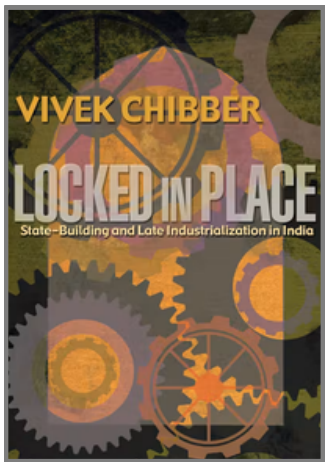
How do states pursue development in the era of financialized globalization? This dissertation argues that a growing number of states have transformed developmentally-oriented organizations into large, global institutional, using the tools of global finance to pursue a new mode of state-led development. I answer three questions: why did developmentally-oriented sovereign wealth funds (SWFs) emerge and transform into global investors? How do they use the financial tools to realize state goals? And who are the elites at their apex and how do they shape development Through a comparative-historical study of Singapore's Temasek Holdings and Abu Dhabi's Mubadala Investment Company — drawing on 104 interviews, documentary sources, and quantitative data — this dissertation develops a theory of state-led development in the era of financialization.

Despite originating from different institutional starting points, I find that both funds underwent a similar transformation driven by the same enabling conditions and organizational mechanisms — a process I term "state-led financialization." This created a shared institutional arrangement in which these SWFs are embedded in both domestic political coalitions and global financial markets and overseen by senior managers who mediate between the demands of the state and those of global finance. Together this produces a developmental strategy I term "financialized developmentalism" — the pursuit of state objectives through the institutions, instruments, and idioms of global finance. This strategy grants states access to sectors, technologies, and networks otherwise closed to late developers, but simultaneously reshapes developmental priorities toward what is financially measurable and politically visible. The reach of this strategy, however, varies with the strength of pre-existing bureaucratic institutions. Where strong bureaucracies provide alternative sources of policy expertise, financial logics inform but do not dominate developmental priorities; where they are weak, the categories of global finance permeate the state's developmental imagination more thoroughly.

In effect, this dissertation does not rehearse narratives about the death of the development, nor even the decline of the developmental state, but rather, the transposition of development to an entirely new domain — that of global finance.

Development Podcast Spotlight: The Books Behind the Work

In this upcoming episode of *The Books Behind the Work*, host Sebastián Rojas-Cabal speaks with Professor Monica Prasad. Setting aside her own extensive scholarship, Prasad reflects on Vivek Chibber's influential book *Locked in Place*. She discusses its central thesis on the developmental state, its impact on the sociology of development, and how its insights connect to her own problem-solving approach. This transcript was lightly edited for clarity and brevity.



Locked in Place: State-Building and Late Industrialization in India
Vivek Chibber
Princeton University Press 2003



Monica Prasad
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Founder of the Center for Global Poverty

Monica: First of all, thank you for doing this. I think these podcasts are a great idea and the fact that you're getting people to talk about not their book, but another book, I love. Before I get into the book, I have to tell you a story about the book. I was a graduate student at the University of Chicago in the 1990s. I had gone to grad school thinking that I would study India. I got to grad school, and in the 90s, at least at the University of Chicago, it seemed that if you wanted to study India, you had to engage with Subaltern Studies. And I feel like I would rather spend my life chewing gravel than dealing with Subaltern Studies. So I was also interested in other things, Reagan, etc., and so I decided to do my dissertation on that. Years later, I came across Vivek Chibber's book, which is about India and South Korea. I read the book. It engages India, and there's nothing about Subaltern Studies, and I thought: wow, you're allowed to do that? You can just ignore it? That was some revelatory to me. And then the first time I met Vivek, I told him all of this, and he laughed, and he said, well, I have bad news for you: my second book is gonna be about Subaltern Studies.

Sebastián: That story resonates because, I when met Vivek Chibber, it was talking about the other book. I thought *that* was what he was about, and then, when I became interested in the state, I was like, wait, you had a whole other career talking about the state before? It's funny that that's your story. So what is *Locked in Place* about?

Monica: So *Locked in Place* is a book about why South Korea developed and India did not, at its most basic. It's part of a set of books on the developmental state, and Vivek's specific contribution is to point out that it's not just about state capacity. **His contribution is to point to the role of what he calls nodal agencies, which are specific agencies, focal points, or organizations within the state that are responsible for coordinating the state's response, and are able to coordinate the state's response.** And then it's just this beautiful job of showing how it is just not possible in India for various reasons, and how in South Korea, the Economic Policy Board does manage to do this coordination. And so there are so many contributions that the book makes. It's based on archival evidence. The India part especially is based on this rich archival evidence, which Vivek tells this funny story about access and non-access to Indian archives in the beginning of the book. And I love teaching with it too. Iit's one of my favorite books in sociology.

Sebastián: Let's get to the teaching of *Locked in Pleace*. Has your understanding of the book and its contributions changed as you've read it multiple times? Is there something that you found after discussing it with students?

Monica: Oh, absolutely. That happens with any really good book, right? And this is a dense, dense book. And, you know, I make not only my grad students, but also my undergrads read it [...] I think it's a really good book to teach with because if you were able to understand this book, you understand so much about development.

Sebastián: Where does it fit in your teaching sequence? Is it like an early book in a syllabus or a later book? What goes before?

Monica: I haven't taught this in an undergrad development class yet. I teach it in my undergrad Global Capitalism class. We actually start the Global Capitalism class with communism and then we sort of work our way to free market and neoliberalism by the end. *Locked in Place* sits in the middle: state-interventionist, market-oriented regimes. What I love teaching about it is that you have to build up to it. It requires you to lay a lot of groundwork. If students master this, they have to master theories of comparative advantage; they learn about the East Asian miracle; they learn about these theories of the state—why are sociologists so interested in the state and state capacity? We go back to Weber; it brings in all these relational arguments between the state and capital, and of course, Vivek is a Marxist, so he's got this Marxist argument about disciplining.

Sebastián: Let's talk more about the things that make the book attractive. It's definitely, methodologically interesting. Since you also work with the historical record, I want to hear you reflect on what you think he does well in terms of using the archives, if you learned anything from that, or how it informs the historical part of a lot of work on development?

Monica: He's pretty ambitious. It's a comparative historical study, but there are pieces of it where he challenges the [standard account.] I'm not an expert, but I read all the reviews, and both Indian and Korean historians take it seriously. He manages to do primary archival research as well as a comparative historical study. That is really impressive. There is this piece about Indian businesses, they put forth this plan [The Bombay Plan], and so the general take on this was that businesses

were on board with state planning. And what he does really well, including using archival evidence is to show that this was kind of a front. Businesses were just doing this in order to avoid being on the hook for an actual, substantial planning apparatus. So he manages to do this using archival evidence, and then he also draws on the latest Korean scholarship, including dissertations, about South Korea at that time. So it's really just a masterful marshaling of all of these resources to tell the story.

Sebastián: A lot of your scholarship has focused on Western cases, and on the neoliberal turn in Western cases, in France, the U.S., and other places in Europe. Something that's interesting about Chibber's book is that he situates the study of industrial policy or the developmental state in India and Korea within that tradition. Is that something that spoke to you when you first read the book?

Monica: There's this divide in sociology where we think about developmental states as a late capitalism thing, or an East Asia or South Asia thing, but France was a developmental state. There are developmental state aspects to even the U.S. nowadays. There have been cohesive attempts at state development, including in the most laissez-faire states like the U.S.

Sebastián: How did the book change the way you thought about development? There's a lot in there about the relationship between state and capital, about cohesiveness and capacity. How did it change how you thought about the state?

Monica: It's one of these books that I continue to think about. And one of the things that I've been noticing lately is that there's a lot of really interesting thinking about state capacity that is coming from odd corners. In the legal academy, there is this sort of tradition that has emerged, starting with people like Nicholas Bagley, he's a legal scholar at the University of Michigan; Jennifer Pahlka, she is at the Niskanen Center; and this book that got a lot of attention by Ezra Klein and Derek Thompson, Abundance. They argue that the state can get in its own way: you pass laws for environmental purposes, and then people weaponize them to prevent environmental projects from being built, for example. So there is a sort of progressive deregulation kind of idea. And I see similarities between that and the nodal agency idea: it's not just about having a strong state, it's not just about infrastructural power, there's also something about coordination that is important here. I continue to use ideas like that in my work. Right now I'm doing this thing about populism and trade that is kind of drawing on these ideas. It continues to be a very fruitful line for me.

Sebastián: How do you see it impacting the way you and your students think about the relationship between labor and capital?

Monica: The labor and capital bit is interesting. Vivek has this argument about disciplining capital, which I've learned a lot from, but I don't think you actually need to see it only in Marxist terms. By disciplining capital, what he's talking about is: the problem with Import Substitution Industrialization is that firms get very large and don't have any real pressure to be competitive, so they're not efficient. And economic growth suffers. The argument for South Korea is that the state kind of helped them firms competitive for export markets. So, his argument about discipline is that you need to be able to discipline firms so that they become competitive. I think the argument is perfectly accurate and convincing. I don't think it's really necessarily a Marxist argument. The

word “discipline” makes it seem Marxist, but there are other kinds of mechanisms that you can introduce to introduce discipline, or to introduce competition, like anti-monopoly kinds of powers.

Sebastián: What would be a more authentically Marxist version of discipline?

Monica: He does have this interesting kind of counterfactual or speculative chapter about labor power, and so that's what he means by discipline: you need a way to make firms be competitive. So, within Import Substitution Industrialization, he suggests that if labor can be powerful enough, you could achieve this kind of competitiveness. And, again, I love all of this, but I'm not quite convinced, because workers often have the same interest in working in a monopoly firm. So it's not clear whether you would have the kind of discipline you need. I love that we're even having the conversation because that chapter is like a problem-solving chapter, you know, how can you actually do this? But if you ask me, I would say it's anti-monopoly, the kinds of things that you need.

Sebastián: Another way in which I found the book very interesting was in the way in which it mobilizes both a structuralist account of why the developmental state could work out or not work out, but it's also very clear about the role of contingency in all of this. I would love to hear your thoughts on how he masters those two elements in the explanation, which are always hard for social scientists to deal with. A big part of it is setting up the explanation in terms of when it happens for Korea versus India, and kind of the opportunities that we're opening up for Korean firms at that point in time...

Monica: I mean, the whole thing is set off by this massive contingency of the Japanese market being available for South Koreans. We do discuss that a lot in my class, that if you follow the causal chain all the way down, it seems to just be luck. And maybe there is contingency in that it does depend on what other countries are doing, but until now that niche has been available to other countries also. We were in a free-trading global regime, and so other countries were able to follow this as well.

Sebastián: Let's talk more about the nodal agency. The idea of the nodal agency is central to Locked in Place. Why did it not play out in the Indian case and how does it happen in the Korean case?

Monica: Basically, in India, the planners set this plan, but they don't have the ability to ensure that everyone is acting according to the plan. Everyone knows this, and therefore they don't act according to plan. In South Korea, it's a much more cohesive process: the state gives out loans if you're doing what they want—zero-interest or very low-cost loans—and they have disciplinary tools they can implement if you don't. All of this is kind of structural, going all the way back to the Import Substitution Industrialization decision. So, if you pursue Import Substitution Industrialization, it is not in the interest of firms to cooperate with the state in this particular way. If you do Export-Led Industrialization—and I think this is something that I learned from the book, that it is really, really hard for these tiny Korean firms to make it on the world market without the help of the state, so it's in everyone's benefit to cooperate so that you can actually be competitive in export markets. So that structure produces this lack of cooperation in India

between firms and the state. No one's cooperating with the plan; therefore, the plan doesn't work; therefore, no one believes in the plan; therefore, the planners are these ridiculous figures. It all kind of flows downstream from that decision to do Import Substitution Industrialization.

Sebastián: If somebody was coming into the field of the sociology of development asking what they must read, and you were to pitch *Locked in Place*, what would be the pitch?

Monica: It's a great explanation for the biggest question of our discipline, and it's a specific moment in the intellectual development of the discipline. So not only do you get this interesting take on a substantive question, but you also sort of see how our discipline has been developing through it. He sort of encapsulates this Weberian development that has been happening for a few decades. And then you can also see the development that is happening after this. So people are thinking: the developmental state is important. And then this fascinating new line of research develops, which is: well, **how do you get a developmental state?** If it's so important, we need to figure out how we actually get it. And then, you're getting people like Erin McDonnell and Michael Roll and Marina Zaloznaya who are talking about, well, let's look at the little pieces of the state where there is a state. So there's this lovely, cohesive thread that you can follow for this particular kind of macro comparative, comparative historical sociology of development.

Sebastián: The book works within like a tradition about state autonomy and embedded autonomy. Since it stands in contrast with another big book, in our subdiscipline at least, Embedded Autonomy by Peter Evans, how does Locked in Place go beyond what Peter Evans shows us?

Monica: Definitely Peter Evans is the reference point for Chibber. And Evans's work is very important in kind of laying the foundation for this. I feel you just understand the issue of what a state has to do to succeed in export markets much better with Chibber. You get a picture of how difficult it is for a small, not-yet-industrialized country to break into these highly competitive export markets — Korea has to compete, in the beginning, with American textiles, this little minnow thrown into the water. You see how the state is so crucial to that competitiveness, to engineering that competitiveness, constructing that competitiveness. I think Evans was necessary for Chibber, but I think Chibber lets you see a little bit more of what the challenge is, what the task is for a developing state. Sebastián: You mentioned something when you were talking about the more speculative chapter, and you called it a very problem-solving chapter. I want to ask about the problem-solving pathways and opportunities you see the book either taking up or not fully taking up. If you were to teach it as part of a problem-solving approach, how would you embed the book in that approach?

Monica: Thank you so much for mentioning problem solving. And I'll just plug Johns Hopkins' Center on Global Poverty, which is trying to do this problem-solving approach to sociology of development. One of the big things that I like to say about problem solving is that trying to solve a problem is really the most intellectually difficult and ambitious thing you can do. It's very easy to describe it, it's very easy to complain about it. If you're trying to figure out what to do about it, i't's not easy at all. And so it requires all of your creativity, requires all your intelligence. I feel this piece fits in because people sometimes say, "Oh, problem solving is just about solving small problems." And that's not really what the problem-solving approach is about. I think of problem solving more as kind

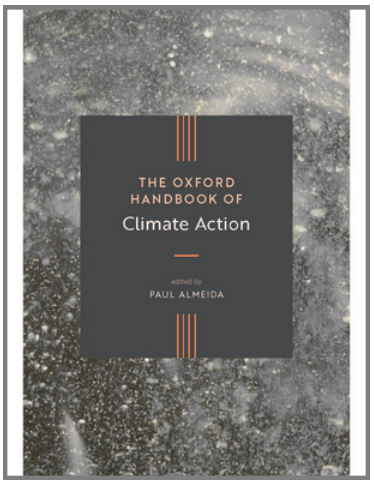
of an approach to how you ask questions. If our goal is less child mortality, then how do you actually aim in that direction? If the way to get there is to overthrow capitalism, well, what is the way to overthrow capitalism? Adam Reich does this terrific stuff at Columbia about, well, okay, if we want to overthrow capitalism, how do you get workers to organize? These questions require you to be more ambitious. They're just more challenging questions. So I see Vivek as anchoring this kind of big problem-solving question in a really systematic, grounded-in-evidence kind of way.

Sebastián: I think that is a great place to end. Monica, thank you so much for joining us.

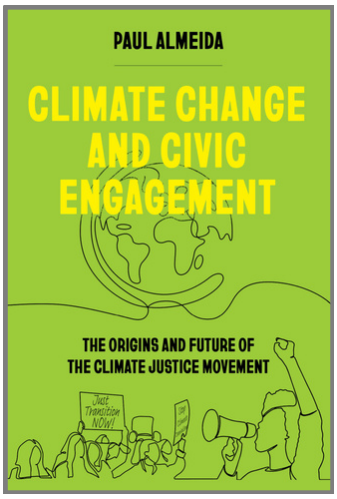
Monica: Thank you so much for doing this, Sebastian.

Publications

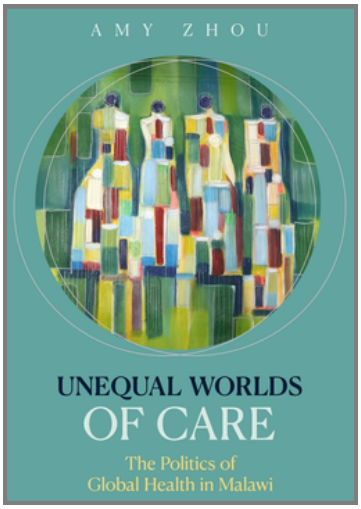
Books



The Oxford Handbook of Climate Action
Paul Almeida, ed.
Oxford University Press
2026



Climate Change and Civic Engagement
Paul Almeida
University of California Press
2026



Unequal Worlds of Care:
The Politics of Global Health in Malawi
Amy Zhou
University of California Press
2026

Publications

Sociology of Development Special Issue: "Solving Global Poverty"

Sociology of Development (Vol. 12, No. 3)

Several of the articles in the issue were originally presented at the 10th Annual Sociology of Development Conference, also titled "Solving Global Poverty," held at Johns Hopkins University in October 2024.

Articles in the special issue:

- Erin McDonnell, Monica Prasad. Problem-Solving Sociology of Development
- Rahardhika Utama. Embedded Peasantry: A Critical Event Analysis of Postcolonial Agricultural Development in Indonesia and Malaysia
- Raka Sen, Saleh Ahmed, Mahmuda Akter. Persistent Myths: Temporality, Everyday Adaptations, and Arrested Mobility in the Sundarbans
- Aruna Ranganathan, Laura Doering. The (State–Private) Ties that Bind: Status, Interactions, and Economic Development in India
- Jessica Kim, Aarushi Bhandari. Utility and the Attention Commodity: Contradictions in Mobile ICT Use in the Global South
- Paromita Sanyal, Monika Pareek. Can Credit Solve Poverty and Precarity? Explorations in the Margins of Metropolitan India
- Patrick Heller. The Democratic Social Developmental State: Parameters of the Possible in the Global South



Publications

Articles

McDermott, J.L., and M. Bisciglia. 2026. “Dependency, Resource Extraction, and Informality in Africa: Connecting Primarization and Informal Employment.” New Political Economy.

Potiker, Spencer Louis. 2026. “From Just-In-Time to Just-In-Case: Supply Chain Urbanism in San Diego-Tijuana.” International Journal of Urban and Regional Research.

Marwah, Vrinda. 2026. "Fair Pay, Performance Optimizer, or Status Marker? The Social Meaning of Remuneration for India's Women Community Health Workers." Social Science & Medicine 400: 119257.

Stillerman, Joel. 2026. “Will a Rising Middle Class in the Global South Reshape Politics?” In the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Sociology. Lynette Spillman, editor. New York: Oxford University Press.

Dill, Brian. 2026. "Reparative Development: Reorienting Development Sociology." Sociology of Development, 1–26.

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Zhou, Zhipeng. 2026. "Job precarity and earnings inequality in contemporary China." Social Forces, soag087.

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Marwah, Vrinda. 2025. “Intimacy Double Bind: The Labor Women Workers Put Into Their Supervisors.” Gender & Society, 39(6), 853-881.

Marwah, Vrinda & Sharmila Rudrappa. 2025. “An Omission Revisited, or Making Sense of Baby Markets in India.” Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 50(4), 811–837.

Announcements

LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS

The Section is currently looking for volunteers:

- To serve on **2027 Faculty Article Award**. Most of this work takes place in the Spring;
- To serve on **2027 Graduate Student Article Award**. Most of this work takes place in the Spring.

If you are interested in volunteering, please email **socdevchair@gmail.com**.

BUILD COMMUNITY BY SHARING DEVELOPMENT RELATED VIRTUAL AND HYBRID EVENTS

This year, we hope to build a greater sense of community through virtual and hybrid events of interest to Section members held throughout the year at our different institutions. With technologies like Zoom, there's no reason we need to wait until SocDev in May to connect. So if you know of a development related virtual or hybrid event that might be of interest to our section members, send an email to socdevchair@gmail.com. We will help get the word out about it, grow your audience without increasing our carbon footprint, and make the world smaller at the same time. We all benefit by sharing what's on offer at our various institutions. Simply send an email to have your event publicized in the next section email.

WANT TO WORKSHOP YOUR PAPER?

Interested in workshopping a paper in a virtual forum? You provide your name and affiliation; the paper title and abstract; time and date of the event; Zoom link; and paper. We will advertise your event to the section. If you prefer to only send the paper out to those who will attend, note that in the information you send, and we will request that folks who are interested in participating should contact you for a copy of the paper. Simply email **socdevchair@gmail.com** with the details.

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:
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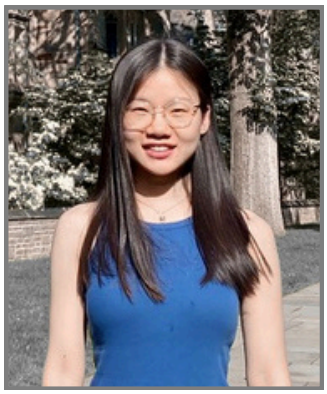

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