



Environment and Society: Advances in Research

Call for Abstracts:

Knowledge Encounters

Guest Edited by Laura Otto and Arno Pascht

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Unprecedented environmental changes—including extreme weather events, ocean warming, biodiversity loss, and rising sea levels—are (re-)shaping the world. Consequently, actors across various regions face major transformations and growing uncertainty about their relationship

with, and appropriate responses to, their (changing) environment(s). Communities, researchers, decision-makers and other actors seek appropriate ways to understand, respond to, and manage environmental challenges and (re-)shape relationships to their environment(s). In this complex landscape, a wide array of bodies of knowledge or ways of knowing—ranging from formal scientific research to everyday experiential knowledge—emerge as critical resources. However, the interactions between these different types of knowledge and ways of knowing are often fraught with tensions, misunderstandings, and power imbalances, but being subject to emerging frictions (Tsing 2005), they hold creative potential at the same time. The rationale of this special issue is to explore these intricate and often contentious interactions between diverse knowledges as actors grapple with environmental changes and challenges. We aim to examine how lay people, scientists, policymakers, and members of various institutions and organizations engage with, interpret, and utilize different forms of environmental knowledge or ways of knowing environmental changes. The contributions of the special issue will investigate the processes through which knowledge—or knowing—is co-produced, translated, and negotiated in local contexts and how these processes contribute to create local environmental relations, praxis, decision-making and policy implementation. In so doing, the special issue also critically assesses the power dynamics and epistemological or ontological challenges that arise when different bodies of environmental knowledge converge.

Our proposed issue highlights the urgent need to address contemporary environmental changes, including climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental injustice, which are central concerns of *Environment & Society*. In line with the journal's interest in interdisciplinary studies that explore the intertwined nature of society and environment, the issue will contribute to scholarly discourse/discussion by exploring how scientific and everyday knowledge coalesce, conflict, and inform each other. Our idea and rationale speak to a series of issues that have been published with *Environment & Society*. With a focus on knowledge and knowing, our special issue links to the recent issue about "Flood & Fire (2023)", which emphasizes intensifying effects of climate change by focusing on how knowledge plays a critical role in understanding how different actors engage with these changes in non-linear ways. Our proposed issue takes seriously the call for research that analyzes, much like in the issue on "Measures and Metrics" (2017), how knowledge about environmental changes and challenges is produced, practiced, and maintained or neglected and, thus, clearly speaks to the issue on "Nature and Knowledge" (2014). In a similar vein as the special issue on "Global Black Ecologies" (2022), our proposed issue challenges mainstream environmental discourse, which often overlooks both historical dynamics and (post-)colonial relations in how discourse about environmental change comes about. As argued for in the issue on "Pollution and Toxicity" (2021) our issue invites scholars who include multispecies actors, such as harmful algae, groundwater, or so-called invasive species in perceived 'native' landscapes. Our proposed special issue thus builds on and expands these publications with contributions addressing a broad range of topics and geographical areas.

Including a substant literature review on their main topic, potential contributions might address, but are not limited to, the following main aspects:

- Various ways in which communities utilize different bodies of knowledge to address multiple environmental challenges
- Interactions between scientific knowledge and everyday knowledges/knowing in navigating environmental changes
- Explorations of the ways different communities construct narratives around environmental changes and concerns
- How non-human entities (such as animals, plants, and ecosystems) are considered in the construction and validation of knowledge
- How theoretical developments in post-humanism, multispecies anthropology, and ontological anthropology may be used in conjunction with fields such as Africana/Black, Indigenous, Queer, and/or Feminist Studies to rethink how knowledge is produced and understood in the context of environmental changes
- Ways in which bodies of knowledge interrelate or contradict in scientific practices, policies, and or media about environmental change

Research questions include, but are not limited to: How do different bodies of knowledge or ways of knowing inform or contradict each other in times of environmental changes? Which practices exist to produce knowledge about environmental changes? How are policy effectiveness and community acceptance realized, or hindered? What are the methods and tools that can facilitate meaningful dialogue and collaboration across different bodies of knowledge? Which roles do media, cultural heritage, and historical memory play in narrative constructions? How do multispecies perspectives challenge traditional human-centered approaches, and what new insights do they offer? What are the implications of power dynamics for equity, justice, and inclusion in environmental decision-making?

We believe that our proposed special issue will make a novel and significant contribution to the ongoing scholarly discourse on environmental knowledge by looking at the effects of the interactions between often separated domains of different ways of knowing with a focus on scientific and everyday environmental knowledge. Whereas existing studies that look at such interactions have often focused on associated conflicts (Blaser 2009), the special issue will also look at the creative outcomes of those interactions, being the result of frictions (Tsing 2005), open conflicts, ontological innovation (Salmond 2017; Pascht 2019, 2023) or other options that do not privilege one way of knowing or knowledge tradition (Hastrup 2015, 2016; Verran 2002; 2013) including the possibility that people can utilize multiple ways of knowing the environment, depending on the context (Schnegg 2019; 2021). The issue will provide a platform for dialogue and case studies based on ethnographic fieldwork, drawing on insights from anthropology, sociology, environmental studies, science and technology studies (STS), and beyond. By critically examining how different forms of knowledge interact in practice, the issue aims to offer valuable insights for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners working to address environmental changes and the challenges they entail.

KEY DATES

Abstracts Due (abstracts may be up to 250 words): February 15, 2025

Notifications for Authors: March 1, 2025

Completed Articles Due for initial review: July 15, 2025

Final Submission Due: May 1, 2026

Please submit a 250-word abstract to ares.journal@gmail.com to be considered for this special issue of *Environment and Society: Advances in Research*. Please send all inquiries to jerry.jacka@colorado.edu or ameliamoore@uri.edu.

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