



Environment  
and Society

---

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

---

**Debra Davidson**  
**University of Alberta**  
[ddavidso@ualberta.ca](mailto:ddavidso@ualberta.ca)

Dear friends and colleagues,

The past six months of eruptive events reminds me of Christian Parenti's apt naming of our times: catastrophic convergence, in which disruptions become intimately entangled, unfolding and amplifying each other at such a head-snapping pace it becomes all too easy to feel buried under their weight. I find myself exhausted after a brief reading of the morning news. Breonna Taylor was shot 8 times while lying in her bed by a police officer who broke into her house, because allegedly someone at that address was receiving packages of drugs. Another police officer held his knee on the neck of George Floyd for eight minutes, for the alleged crime of passing a counterfeit bill in a convenience store. Our elderly are left unattended in care homes, in some cases to die, alone. COVID-19 infection rates in Indigenous communities are among the highest in the world. One-fifth of Australia's forests were burned in less than a month. Typhoon Vongfong made international news when it plowed in to the Philippines ... for about five minutes, and now one third of Bangladesh is submerged. In Brazil, which was to be the site our Forum this month, the Amazon and its Indigenous peoples are under attack, primarily by white settlers who were given license to the forest by their elected commander in chief, the same commander who has proclaimed the pandemic to be none of his concern, all the while Brazilians are experiencing among the highest daily death tolls in the world. And hardly remarked upon at all, May, 2020 was the hottest month on record.

Headline after headline reminds me of the systemic connections between racially motivated violence, pandemic health hazards, and climate change. Climate, disease, and racism are deeply entangled, and have been for centuries. Global warming allows for the emergence of novel diseases, enhanced viability of non-novel ones, and rapid spread of them both. The institutional processes that have rendered non-white and Indigenous peoples, women, queer, disabled, elderly, of lesser value, and hence more vulnerable to the impacts of climate, compromised health, and violence at the hands of military and police forces, are the same: patriarchy, colonialism, capitalism. Nor should we be surprised, with this systemic lens, by the rise of authoritarianism – rooted in the fragility and fear felt by those in power, and the assertion of that authority in the form of criminalizing civil liberties and dismantling of environmental laws – attacking two of our most crucial bastions of justice, and hence the two most formidable restraints on the accumulation of power.

I, like many of you, have been deeply disappointed by the postponement of our much-anticipated Forum, scrambled to deliver classes remotely, while also facing the abrupt need to provide care

and support for children, and had field research plans indefinitely placed on hold. And yet these lamentations pale in comparison to the sufferings of so many others. I do not recall a time in my life when I have felt so overwhelmed, disheartened, angry, and helpless. And fully, painfully aware of my own white, Northern, middle class privilege. I have found it necessary to continually remind myself of my roles, our roles, as scholars. We are teachers, and we are researchers. And we know how to pursue these endeavours with reflexivity: to speak from the heart, and to listen with the heart. These are the roles that determine the ways we each are most capable of contributing to change, both in the academy and in our communities and polities, because our scholarship and our citizenship cannot be separated. So if you too have been feeling overwhelmed, helpless, saddened, discouraged, please remember that the work that you do matters.

---

## A NOTE FROM THE SECRETARY

---

**Henrike Rau**  
**LMU Munich**  
[henrike.rau@lmu.de](mailto:henrike.rau@lmu.de)

Dear RC24 members,

Putting together this newsletter has been more difficult than on previous occasions. I live in Bavaria, the southern state of Germany that turned into a COVID 19 hotspot in February 2020 due to people returning from winter holidays in areas in Austria and Italy with high infection rates. Here, the lockdown commenced on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020, including the complete closure of universities, schools and crèches. I thus found myself juggling a full-time university job, with all teaching, research and administrative work shifted online, and looking after two small children. At the same time, my partner, a freelance cameraman, had to deal with the abrupt shutdown of the film and TV sector, with all its financial implications.

Luckily, we stayed healthy during the entire lockdown and were able to manage as a family. Sadly, friends of ours in Germany and abroad were less fortunate, experiencing poor health and economic hardship due to the lockdown. Childcare facilities reopened again fully on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020 but most universities in Bavaria remain shut, with staff and students working from home. It remains uncertain if we can return to any classroom-based teaching later this year. Although a certain 'normality' seems to have returned to everyday life, the full societal and economic fallout from the COVID 19 pandemic and associated lockdown is yet to come. At the same time, the benefits of reduced economic activity for the environment became very visible during the lockdown, sparking debates about a 'green' recovery. The fear of a 'second wave' of infections in autumn also still looms large.

Many RC24 members have been directly affected by the COVID 19 pandemic and I wish you strength in these difficult times. Perhaps this newsletter makes a small contribution towards lifting the spirit. A special thanks to all members who sent in contributions, including those that capture their experiences with the pandemic. This newsletter would not have been possible without you!

Our next newsletter will be published in December 2020. Please send me your contributions by 15<sup>th</sup> November 2020. In addition to new publications and upcoming (online) workshops and

conferences, it would be great to once again include research notes (max. 200 words). Members who are engaged in research on Covid 19 related issues are particularly encouraged to send in short submissions.

---

## UPCOMING CONFERENCES

---

Due to the ongoing Covid 19 crisis, it was not possible to put together a reliable list of upcoming events and conferences. However, many conference hosts and organisers are currently exploring innovative online formats for conferences and workshops. For example, the recent SCORAI North America and Europe conference had to be moved online but attracted considerable attention and high-profile presentations. Hopefully, our next newsletter in December 2020 will once again feature a list of conferences (online and offline).

---

## MEMBERS' CORONA STORIES

---

### *Being and Belonging in an Ecovillage@Dayalbagh: Living in Serenity and Peace*

Meenakshi Sinha Swami, Department of Economics, University of Delhi  
[drmeenakshisswami@gmail.com](mailto:drmeenakshisswami@gmail.com)

The paradigm shift towards localism in the context of ecovillages has been a transformative pathway. The current Covid 19 crisis has made localism more enduring, as is visible in economic functioning across the globe. The loop of consumption and production of basics becomes shorter, sustaining consumers and producers when all attention is on availability and reach of basic consumer items in times of crisis. With the lockdown in India entering phase 4, localism is gaining ground, with even the Indian Prime Minister chanting the localism mantra.

Interestingly, the ecovillage@Dayalbagh is functioning 'as usual' in times of crisis. It is the oldest of modern ecovillages and differs from the other ecovillages that I visited in Europe and Asia. This is a typical Indian ecovillage with modern amenities. At the same time, it is populated by families living 'normal' married lives, with considerable movement in and out of the community. This said, Dayalbagh has a higher rate of residents with Masters and PhD degrees than other areas. Its residents are scientists, academics, bureaucrats, judges and businesspeople like me. Satiety is writ large, and a feeling of being and belonging pervades the air and hearts, as all strive towards better consciousness. A very democratic framework and protean voluntary groups ensure its functioning. Dayalbagh recently celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary and I am a third-generation individual connected to Dayalbagh. As a child, I often visited my grandfather at Dayalbagh and soaked up the serenity and peace of being and belonging.

Dayalbagh produces most of the basic necessities for a simple lifestyle, including cloth, clothes, shoes, bags, herbal medicines and agricultural products. The villages also features its own banking system (part of India's banking structure and laws), schools and colleges and a hospital which has voluntary community doctors serving all the people from the community and outsiders with equal dedication and free of charge. Various departments (e.g. water harvesting, renewable energy)

ensure the village's environmental sustainability. It also stands apart as it accepts voluntary work by members but not money, thus reducing inequality. Moreover, what is produced is cheaper as voluntary work is at the base of it. As a result, goods are cheaper for all, thus reducing the role of money in village life. Voluntary contributions support the others in an intricate network of support and women have an equal say and role in offices. Office holders are selected by an elected body, the Sabha, which is equivalent to an ancient form of rightful governance.

I knew I could get through the Covid 19 crisis if I was at Dayalbagh, rather than in the capital city where I teach. The shift to working online gave me the opportunity to move there. This health crisis has been well taken care of without disturbing the serenity and peace amidst green environs @Dayalbagh, of living in a peacock sanctuary with nature vistas and singing and sighting of birds. Dayalbagh's response to the Covid 19 crisis is best captured by the title of an article published on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020 in the Hindustan Vernacular, a daily newspaper: "When Agra slept, Dayalbagh was awake". Dayalbagh Area remained a Covid-free safe zone in a city (Agra) classified as a 'red zone' because of its high number of Covid 19 cases. Responding to the first Covid 19 death in India on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2020, Dayalbagh has undertaken many preventive measures. From 1<sup>st</sup> February 2020 all ecovillage residents wore protective masks and headgear, which were available at a very low price, and practices safe social distancing of 7.5 feet. Surprisingly, newspapers made fun of residents by printing pictures, but villagers simply ignored this. Dayalbagh also advised all to carry sanitizers and started manufacturing them too, supplying them to residents at no profit. This was complemented by physical exercise programmes for those engaged in voluntary work, especially women.

Voluntary agricultural work continued throughout the crisis but with all the above safety measures. Only self-grown vegetables were consumed and all residents have been advised to soak fruit and vegetables in potassium permanganate before eating them. Residents were also advised to gargle with hot water, participate in physical activity outdoors to raise levels of immunity-enhancing Vitamins D and E and take preventive homeopathy medicines. Early morning voluntary work has been ongoing, thus taking advantage of being in nature and using the *brahma muhurt*, the one and a half hour before sunrise mentioned in ancient Indian texts that is said to be very beneficial for mind, body and soul.

### ***Nature and Human Health during the Crisis***

S.C.Rajora, Professor Em. of Sociology, University of Kota, [drscrajora@gmail.com](mailto:drscrajora@gmail.com)

I followed the news of the COVID 19 pandemic from March 2020 onwards using electronic, print and social media and recognising its seriousness. I feel that I should also mention my present status too, that is, after my superannuation from regular service as a Professor of Sociology in a state university, I have been associated independently with suitable academic activities, along with certain casual-formal institutional engagements. This continued just until before the declaration of complete lockdown throughout India. I reached my home place *Chittaurgarh* just in time, otherwise I would have ended up stranded in another city like many others. During much of the lockdown, I have been confined to my residence with my family members and following the guidelines issued by the authorities.

Against this backdrop, I now shift to certain relevant issues which have been emerging during COVID19, out of these my focus would be on the environmental changes and measures of health care. Despite being physically confined to the home, people have been in touch with one another by way of advanced technology, webinars etc. Regarding environmental protection, several ‘success stories’ have been appearing in newspapers and on TV. Nature and ecological systems could be observed in their original, natural state due to a drastic reduction in human activities regarding nature and natural resources. For example, two rivers in my city have become almost free from industrial waste. Such clean water was a dream, but it became reality during the lockdown. A lesson to be learned is that everything is possible if the will is there to make it reality, even after the COVID19 pandemic and lockdown.

Another issue is related to our health care, particularly during the COVID19 pandemic. Doctors and technical experts say that *‘prevention is better than cure’*. In this regard, I would like to submit that the Indian way of life based on *Yoga* and *Ayurveda* can help prevent all kinds of diseases, including COVID 19. I do start my morning routine with some *Yoga* and breathing exercises. Beneficial *herbs* are also a very significant aspect of prevention from different diseases. Some of the common herbs are like; *Ocimum sanctum (tulsi leaf)*, *Cinnamomum zehypanicum (dalchini)*, *Zingiber officinale (soonti)*, *Piper nigrum (black piper)* etc. A small quantity of each may be mixed and boiled in water and used as an immunity booster. It is a common belief that those who have strong immunity may keep away from the adverse effects of viruses and bacteria. As a concluding remark, it might be that nature has alarmed us to take better care of it and its resources and ‘to live and let live’.

---

## **PURSUING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN RC24**

---

Debra Davidson, University of Alberta, [ddavidso@ualberta.ca](mailto:ddavidso@ualberta.ca)

At our last meeting at World Congress in Toronto in July, 2018, I indicated that one of my priorities as RC24 President will be to assess how we are doing in RC24 with respect to diversity and inclusion, and how we can do better. Since that time, the explosion of global protests over the violence perpetrated against Black people in the United States by police, and the extension of scrutiny to the violence perpetrated against so many others – Indigenous, LGBTQ, Muslims and women to name a few – have only served to clarify just how systemic and institutionalized such forms of oppression and discrimination are, and no organization, including our own RC24, can claim innocence. Now is the time to acknowledge that we can do better, and to make a commitment to do so.

To that end, we established a committee shortly after Congress to pursue the goals of diversity and inclusion in our RC. Please join me in extending a special thanks to our members who offered to contribute to this committee, including Hannah Holleman, J. Timmons Roberts, Rebecca Pearse and Frank Matose. To inform the activities of the committee, they began with the solicitation of views and experiences of our membership, through an online survey. Our response rate was quite small, and so the committee feels strongly that further efforts need to be made to solicit perspectives and feedback from our members, particularly women, and those in non-white, non-western, and LGBTQ communities. We found the results we did receive to be very informative

nonetheless. Below I describe some key findings drawn from the report prepared by the Diversity and Inclusion Committee, led by Hannah Holleman, with particular emphasis on potential action items for RC24. If anyone would like to view the complete report of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee regarding the results of the survey, please contact me.

We received 21 responses in total, including RC24 members from India, Japan, Columbia, Brazil, U.S., Germany, and Australia. Most survey participants appeared to be relatively more senior than our membership as a whole. Among these, half of the sample indicated having experienced some form of discrimination, typically gender, and a small number indicated having experienced harassment or assault. None of these experiences were necessarily associated with RC24.

17 out of the 21 respondents indicated that they have found RC24 to be an inclusive and respectful organization. 16 respondents indicated that active promotion of diversity and/or inclusion is an important goal for RC24. Some concerns that were raised include language barriers, American/Eurocentrism, and the privileging of certain theoretical perspectives.

The survey served as a valuable source of information regarding the types of diversity and inclusion initiatives that have been undertaken at our members' home institutions, and constructive ideas for pursuing these goals within RC24. Notably, less than half of respondents noted either that their home institution had no such policies, or were not aware of them, indicating the degree to which prioritization of diversity and inclusion are far from the norm in academia.

Respondents also shared their perspectives regarding the barriers to the goals of diversity and inclusion in their institutions, including, for example, privileging of narrow research agendas and theoretical perspectives; discriminatory inclinations of people in senior positions; lack of support/commitment or even hostility toward the objectives of diversity and inclusion; and deeply entrenched hierarchies and norms for achievement and recognition.

The following are some highlights of initiatives and ideas drawn from the survey that I believe could benefit our RC to support the proactive pursuit of diversity and inclusion, divided into five key objectives.

- 1) *Support a culture of awareness, openness, learning and mutual support* in existing social engagements/activities; initiating special activities for these purposes; and continuing to solicit the views, ideas, and feedback of our members.
- 2) *Promote, and offer support for, research* on diversity, inclusion, justice and their intersections with environmental impacts/management, and also research *from, or representing*, a diversity of researchers, views, perspectives, and methodologies, through the development of content in our regular conferences, and also holding special pre-conferences, workshops, and other forms of collective engagement.
- 3) *Maintain standards of democracy and transparency in organization decision-making*, including ensuring diversity and inclusion in the distribution of roles and responsibilities; and establishing a permanent Diversity and Inclusion committee to ensure continued prioritization and learning.



- 4) *Seek to maintain and enhance a diverse membership*, through making explicit efforts to support members from minority communities including in particular language inclusion and financial support; pursuing membership diversity in recruitment activities; and collecting and sharing demographic information on our membership.
- 5) *Root out transgressions* through designating an ombud to receive complaints and concerns in confidence; establishing protocols for response to complaints; and offering sensitivity training.

In the coming months, the committee will work with the RC24 Board and Executive to discuss ways to pursue these objectives. As we embark upon this, we would love to hear from you! We are especially keen to hear from members of RC24 with direct experience, research expertise, or knowledge of successful efforts in professional settings to end oppressive and discriminatory practices and promote diversity, inclusion and decolonization. If you wish to offer your feedback, support, and ideas, please contact J. Timmons Roberts at [j\\_timmons\\_roberts@brown.edu](mailto:j_timmons_roberts@brown.edu). We have also kept the member Diversity and Inclusion survey open, so you can share your views that way

too:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScOjwPc5kCxtWeGrIfZ35OnZvwmf715dIE\\_vdN3AB5ocGywKA/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScOjwPc5kCxtWeGrIfZ35OnZvwmf715dIE_vdN3AB5ocGywKA/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1)

---

## RECENT MEMBER ACTIVITIES

---

### MESSAGE FROM GERMAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION RE SOCIOLOGY AND COVID 19

In April 2020 RC24 member and President of the German Sociological Association Birgit Blätzel-Mink shared a document produced that summarises the Corona debates of the German sociological community.

[https://mcusercontent.com/2da0d12f9e05ca0b43592f710/files/1fe9f8f4-8b5e-4e15-a00d-2ad2ea969fa0/DGS\\_GermanSociologicalAssociation\\_OnTheCoronaDebates.pdf](https://mcusercontent.com/2da0d12f9e05ca0b43592f710/files/1fe9f8f4-8b5e-4e15-a00d-2ad2ea969fa0/DGS_GermanSociologicalAssociation_OnTheCoronaDebates.pdf)

The document certainly provides ample food for thought, especially regarding the noted absence of environmental issues from many public debates. It remains to be seen if post-pandemic recovery programmes will provide starting points for a more sustainable society.

### PUBLICATIONS

Biermann, G. and Rau, H. (2020) The meaning of meat: (Un)sustainable eating practices at home and out of home. *Appetite*, 104730. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2020.104730>

Gustafsson KM., Berg M., Lidskog R., & Löfmarck E. (2019) Intersectional boundary work in socializing new experts. The case of IPBES. *Ecosystems and People* 15(1): 181–191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/26395916.2019.1628105>

Johansson J. & Lidskog R. (2020) Constructing and justifying risk and accountability after extreme events: public administration and stakeholders' responses to a wildfire disaster. *Journal of Environmental Planning and Policy* 22(3): 353–365.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1523908X.2020.1740656>

Lidskog R., Berg M., Gustafsson, K. & Löfmarck E. (2020) Cold science meets hot weather. Environmental threats, emotional messages and scientific storytelling. *Media and Communication* 8(1): 118–128. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17645/mac.v8i1.2432>

Löfmarck, E. & Lidskog R. (2019) Coping with fragmentation. On the role of techno-scientific knowledge within the Sámi community, *Society and Natural Resources* 32(11): 1293–1311.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920.2019.1633449>

Mögele, M. and Rau, H. (2020) Cultivating the ‘car state’: A culturally sensitive analysis of car-centric discourses and mobility cultures in Southern Germany. *Sustainability: Science, Practice, and Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15487733.2020.1756188>

Sahakian, M., Rau, H. & Wallenborn, G. (2020) Making “Sustainable Consumption” Matter: The Indoor Microclimate as Contested Cultural Artifact. *Cultural Sociology*,  
<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1749975520932439>.

Truong, D., Parkins, J.R. & Davidson, D.J. (2020): What Shapes Public Engagement in Fracking Issues? *Society & Natural Resources*, DOI: 10.1080/08941920.2020.1772927

Truong, D., Davidson, D.J. & Parkins, J.R. 2020. Context matters: Fracking attitudes, knowledge and trust in three communities in Alberta, Canada. *The Extractive Industries and Society* 6(4): 1325-1332.

Wong, C.M.L. and Jensen, O. (2020) The paradox of trust: perceived risk and public compliance during the COVID-19 pandemic in Singapore. *Journal of Risk Research*,  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13669877.2020.1756386>

---

## **The RC-24 Board 2018-2022**

---

### **Executive:**

Debra J. Davidson (President, Canada)  
Rolf Lidskog (Vice president, Sweden)  
Henrike Rau (Secretary, Germany)  
Saburo Horikawa (Treasurer, Japan)

### **Board of Governors:**

Lotsmart Fonjong (Cameroon)  
Dayong Hong (China)  
Sadegh Salehi (Iran)  
Mark Stoddart (Canada)



Pradip Swarnakar (India)  
Catherine Wong (Luxembourg)

**Past-presidents:**

Koichi Hasegawa (Japan)  
Stewart Lockie (Australia)  
Raymond Murphy (Canada)  
Arthur Mol (the Netherlands)  
Frederick Buttel (USA)  
Riley Dunlap (USA)

**Please consult the RC-24 Website [www.isarc24.com](http://www.isarc24.com) for information about:**

- How to become a member of the RC-24
- Previous Newsletters
- Environmental Sociology journal
- Activities
- Blog
- Governance of RC24
- and more