Special Feature "Against 'Disaster':
Critical Reflections on the Concept" – *peer-reviewed*
https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1971-8853/12824

Sociologica. V.15 N.1 (2021)
ISSN 1971-8853
https://sociologica.unibo.it/

Disasters, Continuity, and the Pathological Normal

Rebecca Elliott* [a] Ryan Hagen† [b]

[a] Department of Sociology, London School of Economics (United Kingdom)
[b] Department of Sociology, Columbia University (United States)

Submitted: April 29, 2021 – Accepted: May 4, 2021 – Published: May 26, 2021

Abstract

In this introductory essay to our symposium we argue that "Sociology After COVID-19" needs to center "disaster" itself as an object of study and theory, and that doing so can productively reframe sociology's fundamental concerns. Building off nascent interdisciplinary work in critical disaster studies, as well as on the insights of our own contributors, we advance and elaborate two theses. First, while disasters are disruptive, they are not purely so; as they unfold, they enfold continuities such that they are best understood as *a part* of social reality rather than *apart* from it. Second, disasters are not pathological deviations from "normal" so much as they are the most salient manifestations of the ways that the normal is in fact pathological. A more critical approach to disaster can lead sociologists to examine more closely the interrelationship between the production of continuities and ruptures in social and economic life, enriching our understanding of core disciplinary concerns about social change, stratification, and inequality.

Keywords: Disaster; Social Change; Risk; COVID-19.

* R.Elliott1@lse.ac.uk

† ryan.a.hagen@columbia.edu

What was COVID-19? Since this symposium continues a series in *Sociologica* that set out to envision "Sociology After COVID-19," we think it appropriate to ask. This question taken seriously eludes easy answers, and will preoccupy sociologists and scholars across academia for years to come. It will be the focus of government committees, after-action reports, historical accounts, and memorials. It will nag at each of us who tries to make sense of the pandemic in the context of our own lives. Undeniably the pandemic was a rupture, an all-encompassing and disorienting transformation of social life that has yet to resolve. The most familiar social frame we have available to understand a rupture like this is disaster.

So what can sociology bring to our understanding of disaster? This question, we argue, is exactly backwards, and is inadequate to the challenge presented by our current moment. Our discipline has long treated disasters as exotic problems, as suspect terrain that intrudes into the social landscape, to which we apply the theories, methods, and assumptions we have painstakingly developed under "normal" conditions. This intellectual division of labor historically hived off and held out to the margins a group of specialists — sociologists of disaster — who studied these abnormal deviations in a space from which they had little interaction with mainstream disciplinary concerns (Tierney, 2007). More recently, as disasters have seemingly intruded more and more frequently into everyday life, mainstream sociology has addressed this schism mostly by subsuming the concerns of disaster sociology beneath its own, pushing away theoretical questions about the definition of disaster in order to address "more fundamental sociological concerns about the contributions of disasters and their aftermath to social stratification, social change, and social inequality" (Arcaya et al., 2020, p. 684). Today, a year and a half into a period of continuous and overlapping disasters, which seem to portend a future in which the boundaries between the suspect terrain of disaster and the regular social landscape are increasingly obscured, we find the more urgent question to be this: how might sociology's fundamental concerns change if we stopped taking for granted that we understood what disasters are and how they are bounded (Shove, 2010; Elliott, 2018)? If we fail to address this question now we will have to ask it again, after the next disaster, and the next, stringing together sociologies of specific events rather than advancing an understanding of the *kind of thing* we're living through and why we will experience it again.

The ambition of this symposium is to sketch out how a critical approach to disaster might inform mainstream sociology. In pursuit of it, we advance two theses that center disaster itself as an object of study and theory. First, we argue that while disasters are disruptive, they are not purely so; as they unfold, they enfold continuities such that they are best understood as *a part* of social reality rather than *apart* from it. There is a lesson here for sociology, as a discipline with, as Orlando Patterson writes, "an entrenched transformational bias" that deflects our attention away from "the persistence of causal processes" that continually reproduce the social order, when in fact "change and continuity are two sides of the same temporal coin" (Patterson, 2004, pp. 73, 75, 101). Understanding disasters as both expressions and causes of unevenly distributed continuities, rather than primarily as ruptures or breakdowns, draws our attention to this duality. Disasters are moments in long-incubating processes that hold some people in positions of greater insecurity than others. These same processes also privilege the powerful with the resources to fortify themselves against disruptive change in a way that, in the aftermath of disaster, "allows them to celebrate themselves for beating the odds, without acknowledging the ways that history had loaded the dice in their favor" (Horowitz, 2020, p. 15).

Second, and related, disasters are not pathological deviations from "normal" so much as they are the most salient manifestations of the ways that the normal is in fact pathological. What some recognize as "social order" is experienced by others as a chain of everyday disas-

ters. Conditions of social stability, when there is no "disaster" to speak of, in fact depend on the *normalization* of certain kinds of suffering, exploitation, and destruction. Disasters tend to be officially declared only when the suffering produced by the social order as a matter of course spills its banks in some way — becoming periods of "suffering out of place," as the historian Jacob Remes (2019) has put it. As such, imperatives to "get back to normal" reify a set of conditions that are chronically disastrous for many people, as well as for the planet (Erikson, 1994). As the late David Graeber (2021) argued, in an essay published posthumously, it is critical that we recognize the pandemic (or, in our view, any disaster) as a "confrontation with the actual reality of human life," where those who do the most "essential" work are "overtaxed, underpaid, and daily humiliated." This feature of normal reality is, Graeber notes, senseless. A sociology that exposes other facets of our senseless normal can and should guide us towards a vision of the transformations we might desire and fight for.

In sum, how should sociology be different "after COVID-19"? The same way it might have been different after Chernobyl and Bhopal, after 9/11, after the Boxing Day Tsunami, after Katrina, after the 3.11 Triple Disaster: by turning its attention to the ways that the production and maintenance of durable social order sometimes expresses itself as disaster, and by recognizing that the establishment and policing of temporal, geographic, and social boundaries around what counts as disaster are central institutional and cultural tools in the process of keeping suffering "in its place."

That brings us to perhaps the most deeply troubling aspect of the question "what was COVID-19," which is its implication that the pandemic has passed. It has clearly not. As we write, Brazil and India are enduring cataclysmic new waves of infection, without the near-term promise of mass vaccination that has eased case numbers and fatality rates in the U.K., U.S., and Israel. The lack of commitment by the Global North to an equitable global vaccination strategy ensures that the pandemic will not be over any time soon, even as life returns to "normal" in certain parts of the world. Indeed, even within countries with ready access to vaccines the pandemic is ending unevenly, stratified by age, class, and race. And as Christina Simko (2021) poignantly observes in her contribution to this symposium, regardless of when the traumas of this pandemic cease to be inflicted anew we will anyway be mourning and grasping for meaning for a very long time. We will bear the scars of who and what we have lost.

To ask "what was COVID-19" is to draw attention to this fact: that the temporal bounding of a disaster is *always* an act of politics, of discrimination. Bounding disaster in time, in space, and in social location is how the powerful mark the "acceptable level of disorder in society" (Gusfield, 1984, p. 150). This observation is the motivating core of nascent interdisciplinary moves toward a field of "critical disaster studies." In recent years, social scientists and scholars in the humanities have coalesced around an interest in reexamining what disaster *is* as a general social phenomenon and construct. Moving beyond the now increasingly commonplace understanding that there is "no such thing as a natural disaster," critical disaster studies provocatively claims that there is "no such thing as a disaster." Yes of course there are material and social ruptures and catastrophic sudden changes in the world, but the designation of certain events and conditions as crises or disasters is an analytic conceit, or an "interpretive fiction," the construction of which must be subject to scholarly interrogation (Remes & Horowitz, 2021). This essay, and our symposium, brings this provocation to sociology. If we entertain the premise that there is no such thing as a disaster, then what we need to elaborate is not the "sociology of disaster" as it has been commonly deployed, but rather a distinct project of probing how life and death, growth and destruction, prosperity and peril, are made routine or exceptional.

1 Disasters as Expressions of Continuity

Our world is always falling apart, as Fernando Domínguez Rubio (2020) put it in his bracing study of conservation at New York City's Museum of Modern Art, illuminating the massive and unrelenting infrastructure of care and maintenance required to hold at bay the "aimless but relentless rebellion of things" that constantly threatens to undo the knot of our modern world (p. 6). But care is always a question of power, Rubio reminds us: what we decide is worth preserving, who will do the caretaking work and how, what resources will be directed to this work and away from other things. It isn't only art objects that must be "kept into being" (Rubio, 2020, p. 333). The fight against COVID-19 has, for much of the pandemic, revolved around debates over which social and economic circuits may be temporarily broken, and which continuities must be protected; which jobs, rituals, and gatherings can be paused and which must go on in spite of the risk of contagion, sickness, and death. The pandemic has been a long public debate about what processes we hold most dear, which lives and livelihoods are most worth preserving.

There is a longstanding insight in the literature that disasters are not "bolts from the blue" but have long histories with deep roots within social life (Turner, 1978). That they are incubated in "institutional arrangements, informal organization, and cultural understandings" (Vaughan, 1999). As Diane Vaughan (1996) has shown, although disasters may appear as periods of social disorganization, they are in fact socially organized into being. Social practices and habits don't just structure and channel the energy of disasters, they generate new, boundary-spanning risks that are especially troubling because they are alien to our historical experience, as Ulrich Beck contended (Beck, 1992 & 2009). Of particular relevance here is the emphasis Beck places on how the production of these new risks of modernity is inextricably intertwined with the production and distribution of wealth. Modern disasters aren't exogenous shocks that collide with and threaten to disrupt globalized capitalist production, in other words, they are the direct results of continuous processes of resource extraction, transformation, and circulation. These disasters are, as the geologist Peter Haff has put it, inevitable turbulence in a global matrix of socio-technical systems that has taken on a self-perpetuating dynamic of its own, one from which humanity "cannot simultaneously escape and survive" (Haff, 2014, p. 302).

In this symposium, our contributors provoke us to think about the interrelation of rupture and continuity in this pandemic, with an eye towards our continually disrupted future. Roi Livne (2021) probes how policymakers, confronted with the unprecedented economic consequences of the pandemic, have in some cases fallen back on habituated ways of framing the crisis, but have in other cases shifted away from these frames to center as a radically new policy goal the practical provision of sustenance for individuals and institutions, a shift in economic thinking with potentially long-lasting transformative consequences. Robin Wagner-Pacifici (2021) analyzes how and why rearticulations like the ones Livne (2021) describes take place. Examining the intertwined events of the pandemic and the racial justice uprisings in the U.S., she argues that COVID-19 and ruptures like it produce a "double exposure," stripping away material or cultural protections while unmasking or bringing to light long-existing social problems that suddenly become broadly recognized as untenable. Gary Alan Fine (2021) argues that the selective masking of social problems in the first place "does not simply happen but occurs because of power structures that encourage this absence [of knowledge]" (p. 50). Fine writes that "we may be persuaded that some questions should not be asked or answered. Groups may wish to keep topics hidden or unaddressed because it serves their interest. [...] Just as facts have provenance, so does their absence." He shows us how the rumors that circulate in times of

social stress are rooted in everyday power relations, and that rumors can either be disruptive of established norms in a destructive way or can be disruptive for desirable social change.

A critical approach should not only reexamine what "disasters" are; it should also inquire into what they *do* in the social world. What is reproduced or preserved through them? Recent scholarship has shown how disaster relief can systematically contribute to stratification (Gotham & Greenberg, 2014; Elliott & Howell, 2016; Howell & Elliott, 2019) or at least fail to mitigate it (Raker, 2020). But the logics of relief and repair that guide institutional recovery efforts do not spring into being when "disaster strikes." They are always operating, formulated and practiced well before disasters are declared. Even critical engagements with disaster response, such as indictments of "disaster capitalism" (Klein, 2007), argue that the logic of marketization as a mode of disaster recovery is an exceptional form of economic rationality, rather than an institutionally habituated extension of banal, already existing neoliberal capitalism to yet one more area of social life.

Just as recent work has argued that poverty is just as much a consequence of housing instability as it is a cause of it (Desmond, 2016; Sullivan, 2018), and racism is an inherent characteristic of certain organizations rather than an accidental deviation from "colorblind" neutrality (Ray, 2019), we should understand disasters not principally as disruptions of social order, but rather as necessarily produced by and productive of that social order in continuity.

2 Normal and Abnormal Forms

"Racism is a pandemic." In the summer of 2020, this refrain could be found on protest signs at Black Lives Matter protests worldwide. It pithily expresses that, like COVID-19, racism is widespread and deadly, evidenced by, among other things, racially unequal mortality rates (in the pandemic but also long-predating it) and in police killings of people of color. In Hennepin County, Minnesota, where George Floyd was murdered by a Minneapolis police officer, Black infants are over three times more likely to die than white infants (Hennepin County Public Health Assessment Team, 2017). The acute horror of the injustice that ended Floyd's life is inextricable from the ecology of ongoing injustices that cut short so many Black lives before they can even begin.

Protesting that racism *is also* a pandemic highlights the stark differences in the extent to which the two have been widely regarded as disasters in need of response. The pandemic has been treated as a global emergency, warranting massive, rapid mobilizations of resources to prevent disease and death and to best treat those afflicted. Governments also called on citizens to engage in acts of collective sacrifice and solidarity. Racism, on the other hand, has not been regarded as an emergency in white supremacist societies, even in the face of long traditions of protest and resistance led by communities of color.

Sociology should follow the activists to ask, essentially, what and where is the disaster, what is the emergency that requires a response — but then also, what has been rendered a pathological normal that societies tolerate and imagine returning to? To declare a disaster is a semiotic act that declares certain patterns of suffering and loss abnormal, accidental, an intolerable deviation from society's desired ends. Other patterns of suffering and loss are then by implication normal and, while perhaps regrettable, an inevitable and tolerable byproduct of the social order.

Normal conditions don't just make certain people and places "disaster-prone," which is how we often talk about the relationships between inequality, oppression, and risk. Those baseline conditions are themselves quotidian and sometimes unremarked disasters. In a study

published in September 2020, Elizabeth Wrigley-Field found that "even in the COVID-19 pandemic, White mortality will remain lower than the lowest recorded Black mortality in the United States" (p. 21854). Even an abnormally bad year for white mortality is better than a normal year — which is to say, every year — for Black mortality. As Wrigley-Field (2020) observes, "Black disadvantage operates every year on the scale of Whites' experience of COVID-19," but we have not "radically reorganize[d] social institutions in order to minimize racial disparities" (p. 21856) the way we have to minimize the risks of COVID-19.

The contributors to this symposium give us ways to reflect on the pathologies of normal life and to consider how the pandemic might help us identify the social facts and processes that have long stood in the way of more equitable, humane, and ecologically sustainable futures. Fayola Jacobs (2021) examines the pandemic as an outcome of racial capitalism, which produces and concentrates wealth through entrenched, systemic forms of oppression that exploit and dispose of Black, Indigenous, and Latinx people. Miriam Greenberg (2021) connects ongoing processes of urban exclusion and a prolonged housing crisis to the intensification of not only the spread of zoonotic diseases like the coronavirus, but also catastrophic wildfire — disasters which coincided to deadly effect in the American West in 2020. Where Greenberg examines the relevance of expansions out of and away from urban areas, David Madden (2021) focuses on the related processes unfolding within them, where the increasing financialization and commodification of urban development has produced compounding precarity — of housing, household resources, and networks of informal care — and individualized risks. Each of these essays provides a diagnosis of the senselessness of our reality and the harms, social and spatial marginalizations, ecological destruction, and precarity it has wrought.

We need those diagnoses if we are committed to informing and supporting projects of social justice and collective flourishing. Such diagnoses allow us to be more discerning about the elements of normal worth getting back to. Perhaps we don't just want to be able to show care for each other again by gathering for birthdays and hugging hello. Perhaps we also want a future where we have more time in the day to care for each other, where the workers who we rely on for care are properly esteemed and compensated, and where care is the organizing principle of social interdependence and the motivating impulse of public policy. As Christina Simko (2021) concludes in her essay, "perhaps there is still a way to reimagine and reconfigure our relationships to one another that creates a deeper sense of security, and the possibility for a meaningful future, for a far greater number of people" (p. 120). In the end, then, we find generative possibilities in thinking more critically about disasters, insofar as they give rise to new ideas about the world we might inhabit.

3 The Trouble with "Disasters"

The radical geographer Kenneth Hewitt (1983) warned nearly 40 years ago that the dominant view of disaster as a state of exception created the illusion of an

> archipelago of isolated misfortunes. Each is seen as a localised disorganization of space, projected upon the extensive map of human geography in a more or less random way due to independent events in the geophysical realms of atmosphere, hydrosphere and lithosphere. [...] [E]ach disaster is an unplanned hole or rupture in the fabric of productive and orderly human relations with the habitat or "natural resources" (p. 13).

Instead, Hewitt argued, disasters were systematically produced, foreseeable expressions of the structural relations between human society and the geophysical world.

If we fail to absorb and expand on Hewitt's insight with critical inquiry, we misapprehend the disasters that face us now. COVID-19, examined along the dimensions taken up by our contributors, troubles taken-for-granted features and understandings of "disasters" as sociological objects, material facts, and human experiences. We ought to bring this trouble with us as we are borne more deeply into the Anthropocene era, where disasters are imbricated with human-produced and planet-affecting infrastructure and technologies (the "technosphere," see Zalasiewicz et. al, 2017). It is easy to restrict our focus to all that climate change will disrupt and disorder, but its uneven effects always have the potential to reproduce the social order, to ensure certain continuities through our efforts to preserve habitable conditions. When we talk of "stabilizing" the climate in the interest of avoiding disasters, we also need to examine whether that assumes we should stabilize the social conditions and political economy that have routinized dispossession, impoverishment, ecological destruction, and human suffering. This symposium implores us to look more closely at the ways that transformation and continuity, the normal and the pathological, coexist and reinforce one another in periods of "disaster."

References

Arcaya, M., Raker, E.J., & Waters, M.C. (2020). The Social Consequences of Disasters: Individual and Community Change. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *46*, 671–691. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-121919-054827

Beck, U. (1992). *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage.

Beck, U. (2009). *World at Risk*. Malden: Polity Press.

Desmond, M. (2016). *Evicted*. New York: Broadway Books.

Elliott, J.R., & Howell, J. (2016). Beyond Disasters: A Longitudinal Analysis of Natural Hazards' Unequal Impacts on Residential Instability. *Social Forces*, *95*(3), 1181–1207. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sow086

Elliott, R. (2018). The Sociology of Climate Change as a Sociology of Loss. *European Journal of Sociology*, *59*(3), 301–337. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975618000152

Erikson, K. (1994). *A New Species of Trouble: The Human Experience of Modern Disasters*. New York: Norton.

Fine, G.A. (2021). Viral Buzz: Rumor and Its Disruptions in Pandemic Uncertainty. *Sociologica*, *15*(1), 43–53. https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1971-8853/11620

Gotham, K.F., & Greenberg, M. (2014). *Crisis Cities: Disaster and Redevelopment in New York and New Orleans*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Graeber, D. (2021). After the Pandemic, We Can't Go Back to Sleep. *Jacobin*, 3 April. https://jacobinmag.com/2021/03/david-graeber-posthumous-essay-pandemic

Greenberg, M. (2021). Seeking Shelter: How Housing and Urban Exclusion Shape Exurban Disaster. *Sociologica*, *15*(1), 67–89. http://dx.doi.org/10.6092/issn.1971-8853/11869

Gusfield, J.R. (1984). *The Culture of Public Problems: Drinking-Driving and the Symbolic Order*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Haff, P.K. (2014). Technology as a Geological Phenomenon: Implications for Human Well-Being. *Geological Society, London, Special Publications*, *395*(1), 301–309. http://dx.doi.org/10.1144/SP395.4

Hennepin County Public Health Assessment Team. (2017). *Infant Mortality*. https://www.hennepin.us/-/media/hennepinus/your-government/research-data/public-health-data/infant-mortality-2017.pdf

Hewitt, K. (1983). The Idea of Calamity in a Technocratic Age. In K. Hewitt (Ed.), *Interpretations of Calamity* (pp. 3–32). London: George Allen & Unwin.

Horowitz, A. (2020). *Katrina: A History, 1915–2015*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Howell, J., & Elliott, J.R. (2019). Damages Done: The Longitudinal Impacts of Natural Hazards on Wealth Inequality in the United States. *Social Problems*, *66*(3), 448–467. https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spy016

Jacobs, F. (2021). Beyond Social Vulnerability: COVID-19 as a Disaster of Racial Capitalism. *Sociologica*, *15*(1), 55–65. https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1971-8853/11659

Klein, N. (2007). *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. New York: Macmillan.

Livne, R. (2021). COVID, Economized. *Sociologica*, *15*(1), 21–42. https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1971-8853/11636

Madden, D. (2021). Disaster Urbanization: The City Between Crisis and Calamity. *Sociologica*, *15*(1), 91–108. https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1971-8853/12405

Patterson, O. (2004). Culture and Continuity: Causal Structures in Socio-Cultural Persistence. In R. Friedland & J. Mohr (Eds.), *Matters of Culture: Cultural Sociology in Practice* (pp. 71–109). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Raker, E.J. (2020). Natural Hazards, Disasters, and Demographic Change: The Case of Severe Tornadoes in the United States, 1980–2010. *Demography*, *57*(2), 653–674. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-020-00862-y

Ray, V. (2019). A Theory of Racialized Organizations. *American Sociological Review*, *84*(1), 26–53. https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122418822335

Remes, J.A.C. (2019). Disasters as Suffering Out of Place: Toward a Spatial, Subjective Definition of Disaster [Conference paper]. *Sustainability: Transdisciplinary Theory, Practice, and Action Conference*. University of Toronto Mississauga, Toronto, Canada, 18 October.

Remes, J.A.C., & Horowitz, A. (Eds.). (2021). *Critical Disaster Studies*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Rubio, F.D. (2020). *Still Life. Ecologies of the Modern Imagination at the Art Museum*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Shove, E. (2010). Social Theory and Climate Change: Questions Often, Sometimes and Not Yet Asked. *Theory, Culture & Society*, *27*(2-3), 277–288. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276410361498

Simko, C. (2021). Mourning and Memory in the Age of COVID-19. *Sociologica*, *15*(1), 109–124. https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1971-8853/11736

Sullivan, E. (2018). *Manufactured Insecurity: Mobile Home Parks and Americans' Tenuous Right to Place*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Tierney, K.J. (2007). From the Margins to the Mainstream? Disaster Research at the Crossroads. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *33*, 503–525. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.33.040406.131743

Turner, B.A. (1978). *Man-Made Disasters*. London: Wykeham.

Vaughan, D. (1996). *The Challenger Launch Decision: Risky Technology, Culture, and Deviance at NASA*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Vaughan, D. (1999). The Dark Side of Organizations: Mistake, Misconduct, and Disaster. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *25*, 271–305. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.25.1.271

Wagner-Pacifici, R. (2021). What is an Event and Are We in One?. *Sociologica*, *15*(1), 11–20. https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1971-8853/11615

Wrigley-Field, E. (2020). US Racial Inequality May Be as Deadly as COVID-19. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, *117*(36), 21854–21856. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2014750117

Zalasiewicz, J., Williams, M., Waters, C.N., Barnosky, A.D., Palmesino, J., Rönnskog, A-S., Edgeworth, M., Neal, C., Cearreta, A., & Ellis, E.C. (2017). Scale and Diversity of the Physical Technosphere: A Geological Perspective. *The Anthropocene Review*, *4*(1), 9–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/2053019616677743

Rebecca Elliott – Department of Sociology, London School of Economics (United Kingdom)
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6983-7026
R.Elliott1@lse.ac.uk; http://rebeccaelliott.org
Rebecca Elliott is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the London School of Economics. Her research examines the intersections of environmental change and economic life, as they appear across public policy, administrative institutions, and everyday practice. She is author of *Underwater: Loss, Flood Insurance, and the Moral Economy of Climate Change in the United States* (Columbia University Press, 2021).

Ryan Hagen – Department of Sociology, Columbia University (United States)
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6555-0746
ryan.a.hagen@columbia.edu; http://www.ryan-hagen.com
Ryan Hagen is a postdoctoral research scholar in the Department of Sociology at Columbia University, USA. Working at the intersection of the sociology of organizations, the environment, cities, and the sociology of knowledge, he studies how risk perception shapes social action and how this work of anticipating future danger influences macro-level social change.