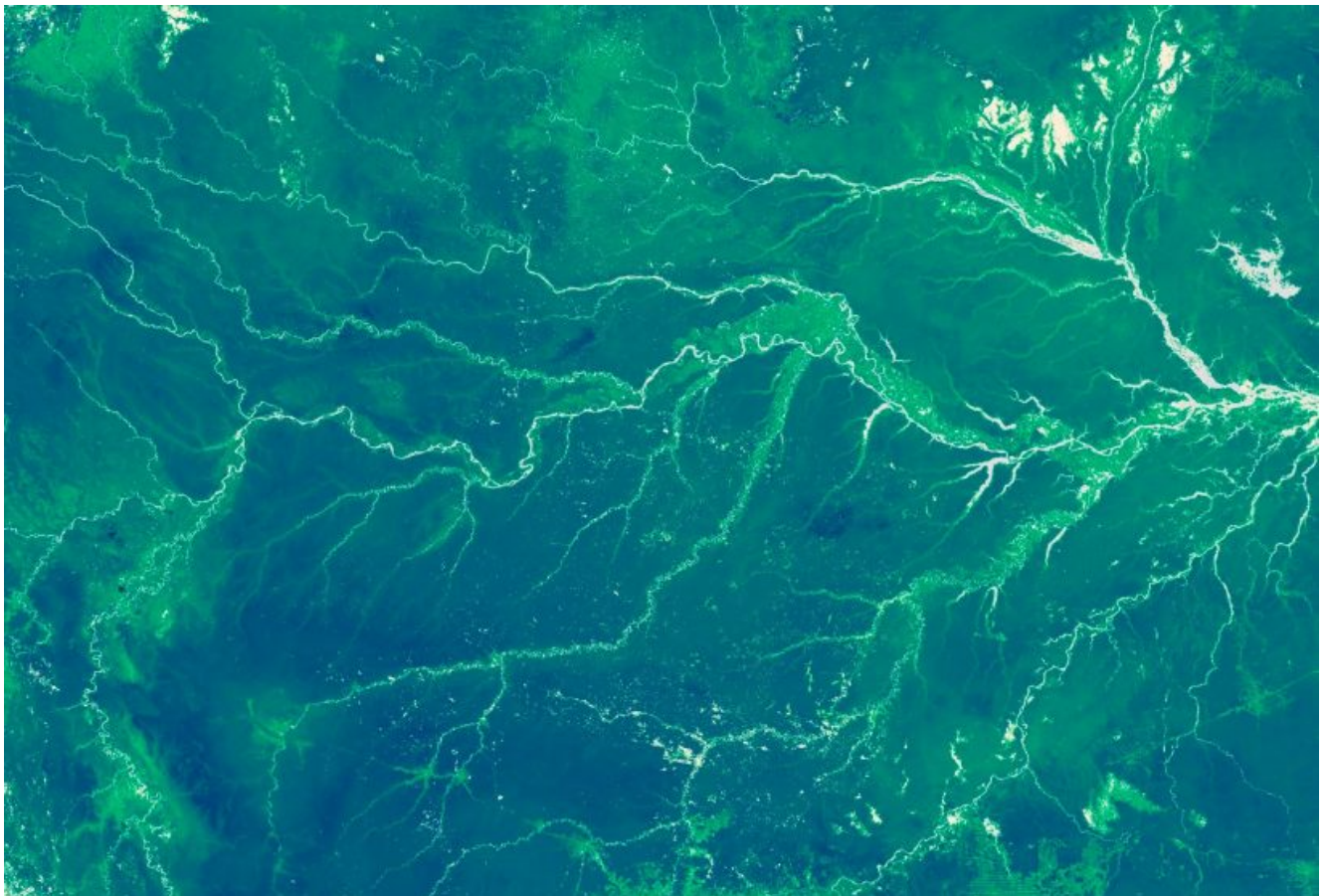




Call for Reviews: Anthropology of Climate Change and the Environment

written by Allegra
January, 2020



As 2020 started with the apocalyptic images of the Australian bush-fires, we at Allegra, felt there was an emergency to feature the work of environmental anthropologists so as to become better informed of how we can join the struggle against climate change and reinvent our relationship to nature. We therefore selected for you a series of recently published books discussing a wide range of related topics, including water, food, techno sciences, forest conservation and global justice. How is neoliberal capitalism destroying our planet? Should water



be considered a global public good? Should we trust scientific discoveries for solving the problem of global warming? What can indigenous forms of knowledge teach us about nature conservation? The books gathered in this list bring ethnographically informed answers to these questions...and more! Get in touch with us if you are interested in reviewing one of them!

How to Proceed:

As we receive many requests for reviews, please send an email to reviews@allegralaboratory.net indicating which book you would like to review, your postal address, and 2-3 sentences explaining why you should be reviewing the book. Please explain how the book relates to your own research or interests. We will get back to you once we have selected the reviewers.

Sarah Besky. 2020. [Tasting Qualities: The Past and Future of Tea](#). University of California Press.



What is the place of quality in contemporary capitalism? How is a product as ordinary as a bag of tea valued for its quality? In her innovative study, Sarah Besky addresses these questions by going inside an Indian auction house where experts taste and value mass-market black tea, one of the world's most recognized commodities. Pairing rich historical data with ethnographic research among agronomists, professional tea tasters and traders, and tea plantation



workers, Besky shows how the meaning of quality has been subjected to nearly constant experimentation and debate over the history of the tea industry. Working across political economy, science and technology studies, and sensory ethnography, *Tasting Qualities* argues for an approach to quality that sees it not as a final destination for economic, imperial, or post-imperial projects but as an opening for those projects.

Benjamin Aldes Wurgaft. 2019. [*Meat Planet: Artificial Flesh and the Future of Food*](#). University of California Press.



In 2013, a Dutch scientist unveiled the world’s first laboratory-created hamburger. Since then, the idea of producing meat, not from live animals but from carefully cultured tissues, has spread like wildfire through the media. Meanwhile, cultured meat researchers race against population growth and climate change in an effort to make sustainable protein. *Meat Planet* explores the quest to generate meat in the lab—a substance sometimes called “cultured meat”—and asks what it means to imagine that this is the future of food.

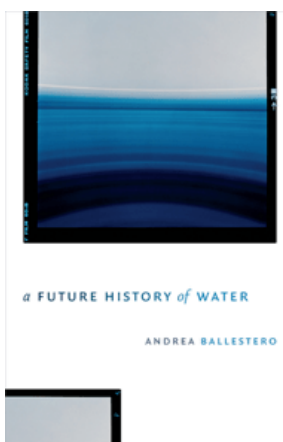
Neither an advocate nor a critic of cultured meat, Benjamin Aldes Wurgaft spent five years researching the phenomenon. In *Meat Planet*, he reveals how debates about lab-grown meat reach beyond debates about food, examining the links between appetite, growth, and capitalism. Could satiating the growing appetite for meat actually lead to our undoing? Are we simply using one



technology to undo the damage caused by another? Like all problems in our food system, the meat problem is not merely a problem of production. It is intrinsically social and political, and it demands that we examine questions of justice and desirable modes of living in a shared and finite world.

Benjamin Wurgaft tells a story that could utterly transform the way we think of animals, the way we relate to farmland, the way we use water, and the way we think about population and our fragile ecosystem's capacity to sustain life. He argues that even if cultured meat does not "succeed," it functions—much like science fiction—as a crucial mirror that we can hold up to our contemporary fleshy dysfunctions.

Andrea Ballesterio. 2019. [*A Future History of Water*](#). Duke University Press.

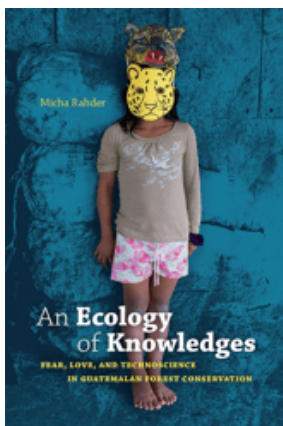


Based on fieldwork among state officials, NGOs, politicians, and activists in Costa Rica and Brazil, *A Future History of Water* traces the unspectacular work necessary to make water access a human right and a human right something different from a commodity. Andrea Ballesterio shows how these ephemeral distinctions are made through four technolegal devices—formula, index, list and pact. She argues that what is at stake in these devices is not the making of a distinct future but what counts as the future in the first place. *A Future History of Water* is an ethnographically rich and conceptually charged journey into ant-filled water meters, fantastical water taxonomies, promises captured on slips of paper,



and statistical maneuvers that dissolve the human of human rights. Ultimately, Ballesteros demonstrates what happens when instead of trying to fix its meaning, we make water's changing form the precondition of our analyses.

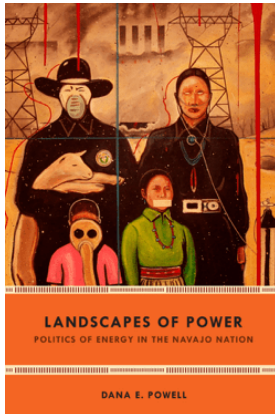
Micha Rahder. 2020. *An Ecology of Knowledges: Fear, Love, and Technoscience in Guatemalan Forest Conservation*. Duke University Press.



Guatemala's Maya Biosphere Reserve (MBR), the largest protected area in Central America, is characterized by rampant violence, social and ethnic inequality, and rapid deforestation. Faced with these threats, local residents, conservationists, scientists, and NGOs in the region work within what Micha Rahder calls "an ecology of knowledges," in which interventions on the MBR landscape are tied to differing and sometimes competing forms of knowing. In this book, Rahder examines how technoscience, endemic violence, and an embodied love of wild species and places shape conservation practices in Guatemala. Rahder highlights how different forms of environmental knowledge emerge from encounters and relations between humans and nonhumans, institutions and local actors, and how situated ways of knowing impact conservation practices and natural places, often in unexpected and unintended ways. In so doing, she opens up new ways of thinking about the complexities of environmental knowledge and conservation in the context of instability, inequality, and violence around the world.

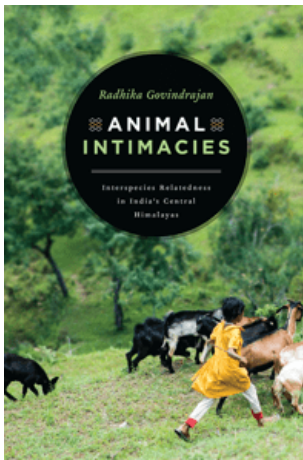


Dana Powell. 2018. [Landscapes of Power: Politics of Energy in the Navajo Nation](#). Duke University Press.



In *Landscapes of Power* Dana E. Powell examines the rise and fall of the controversial Desert Rock Power Plant initiative in New Mexico to trace the political conflicts surrounding native sovereignty and contemporary energy development on Navajo (Diné) Nation land. Powell's historical and ethnographic account shows how the coal-fired power plant project's defeat provided the basis for redefining the legacies of colonialism, mineral extraction, and environmentalism. Examining the labor of activists, artists, politicians, elders, technicians, and others, Powell emphasizes the generative potential of Navajo resistance to articulate a vision of autonomy in the face of twenty-first-century colonial conditions. Ultimately, Powell situates local Navajo struggles over energy technology and infrastructure within broader sociocultural life, debates over global climate change, and tribal, federal, and global politics of extraction.

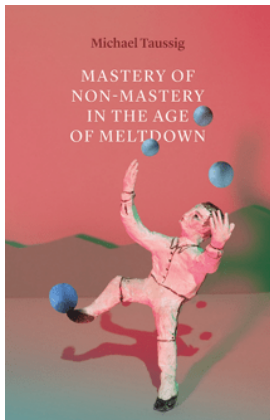
Radhika Govindrajan. 2018. [Animal Intimacies: Interspecies Relatedness in India's Central Himalayas](#). University of Chicago Press.



What does it mean to live and die in relation to other animals? *Animal Intimacies* posits this central question alongside the intimate—and intense—moments of care, kinship, violence, politics, indifference, and desire that occur between human and non-human animals.

Built on extensive ethnographic fieldwork in the mountain villages of India's Central Himalayas, Radhika Govindrajan's book explores the number of ways that human and animal interact to cultivate relationships as interconnected, related beings. Whether it is through the study of the affect and ethics of ritual animal sacrifice, analysis of the right-wing political project of cow-protection, or examination of villagers' talk about bears who abduct women and have sex with them, Govindrajan illustrates that multispecies relatedness relies on both difference and ineffable affinity between animals. *Animal Intimacies* breaks substantial new ground in animal studies, and Govindrajan's detailed portrait of the social, political and religious life of the region will be of interest to cultural anthropologists and scholars of South Asia as well.

Michael Taussig. 2020. [*Mastery of Non-Mastery in the Age of Meltdown*](#). The University of Chicago Press.



For centuries, humans have excelled at mimicking nature in order to exploit it. Now, with the existential threat of global climate change on the horizon, the ever-provocative Michael Taussig asks what function a newly invigorated mimetic faculty might exert along with such change. *Mastery of Non- Mastery in the Age of Meltdown* is not solely a reflection on our condition but also a theoretical effort to reckon with the impulses that have fed our relentless ambition for dominance over nature.

Taussig seeks to move us away from the manipulation of nature and reorient us to different metaphors and sources of inspiration to develop a new ethical stance toward the world. His ultimate goal is to undo his readers' sense of control and engender what he calls "mastery of non-mastery." This unique book developed out of Taussig's work with peasant agriculture and his artistic practice, which brings performance art together with aspects of ritual. Through immersive meditations on Walter Benjamin, D. H. Lawrence, Emerson, Bataille, and Proust, Taussig grapples with the possibility of collapse and with the responsibility we bear for it.

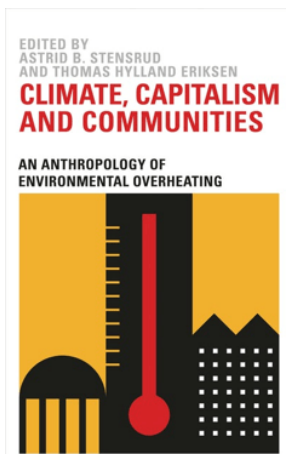
Les Beldo. 2019. [Contesting Leviathan: Activists, Hunters, and State Power in the Makah Whaling Conflict](#). The University of Chicago Press.



In 1999, off the coast of the Pacific Northwest, the first gray whale in seven decades was killed by Makah whalers. The hunt marked the return of a centuries-old tradition and, predictably, set off a fierce political and environmental debate. Whalers from the Makah Indian Tribe and antiwhaling activists have clashed for over twenty years, with no end to this conflict in sight.

In *Contesting Leviathan*, anthropologist Les Beldo describes the complex judicial and political climate for whale conservation in the United States, and the limits of the current framework in which whales are treated as “large fish” managed by the National Marine Fisheries Service. Emphasizing the moral dimension of the conflict between the Makah, the US government, and antiwhaling activists, Beldo brings to light the lived ethics of human-animal interaction, as well as how different groups claim to speak for the whale—the only silent party in this conflict. A timely and sensitive study of a complicated issue, this book calls into question anthropological expectations regarding who benefits from the exercise of state power in environmental conflicts, especially where indigenous groups are involved. Vividly told and rigorously argued, *Contesting Leviathan* will appeal to anthropologists, scholars of indigenous culture, animal activists, and any reader interested in the place of animals in contemporary life.

Astrid B. Stensrud and Thomas Hylland Eriksen(eds.). 2019. [*Climate, Capitalism and Communities: An Anthropology of Environmental Overheating*](#). Pluto Press.



Until now, the growing body of work on environmental anthropology has largely ignored the unavoidable impact of global capitalism on the environment and the extent to which capital itself is a key driver of climate change.

Climate, Capitalism and Communities focuses explicitly on that nexus, examining the injustices and inequalities – as well as the activist responses – that have arisen as a result, and the contradictions between the imperatives of exponential economic growth, and those of environmental sustainability, and society as a whole.

Bringing an innovative, ethnographic toolkit to bear on a crisis that is at once global and highly localised, the authors shift attention away from the consequences of climate change, to a focus on the social relations and power structures that continue to prevent effective action.

Edouard Morena, Dunja Krause and Dimitris Stevis (eds.). [*Just Transitions: Social Justice in the Shift Towards a Low-Carbon World*](#). Pluto Press.



Just Transitions

Social Justice in the
Shift Towards a
Low-Carbon World

EDITED BY
Edouard Morena, Dunja Krause and Dimitris Stevis

In the field of 'climate change', no terrain goes uncontested. The terminological tug of war between activists and corporations, scientists and governments, has seen radical notions of 'sustainability' emptied of urgency and subordinated to the interests of capital. 'Just Transition' is the latest such battleground, and the conceptual keystone of the post-COP21 climate policy world. But what does it really mean?

Just Transition emerged as a framework developed within the trade union movement to encompass a range of social interventions needed to secure workers' and frontline communities' jobs and livelihoods as economies shift to sustainable production. *Just Transitions* draws on a range of perspectives from the global North and South to interrogate the overlaps, synergies and tensions between various understandings of the Just Transition approach. As the concept is entering the mainstream, has it lost its radical edge, and if so, can it be recovered?

Written by academics and activists from around the globe, this unique edited collection is the first book entirely devoted to Just Transition.

Allegra [review guidelines](#):

All reviews should be completed within three months of the receipt of the book.



We use British English (i.e. use -ise and not -ize word endings). We encourage clear expression and simple sentence structures especially if English is not your first language.

Word limit: 750-1500 words.

Font: Times New Roman.

Size: 12.

Line Spacing: 1,5

No footnotes.

If you cite other authors, please reference their publication in the end.

When submitting the review, do not forget to include your name, (academic) affiliation (if any), a photograph of yourself and a short bio of 2-3 sentences.

[Featured Image](#) by *NASA Earth Observatory*