

6S 2022 Sketch Groups Template
Staccato Project Design

AREA: CLIMATE CHANGE, LABOR PRODUCTIVITY AND POLITICS

TITLE

Re-thinking the Measurement of Labor Productivity: Disability, Vulnerability and Climate Change

RESEARCHERS

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ABSTRACT, INTELLECTUAL MERIT, BROAD IMPACT

With areas of the so-called Global South writ large experiencing the brunt of negative impacts because of vulnerabilities carved through histories of colonization and inequities in postcolonial governance, recent discussions on community resilience and adaptation tend to ignore disabled groups within already-marginalized groups. Often treated as economically “unproductive,” many who are disabled in India are treated as objects of state welfare and familial dependency, but not necessarily producers of labor. As the effects of climate change may increase the disabled population, collective care for disabled people as subjects rather than objects is urgently needed. Drawing on case studies of two coastal sites in India experiencing heatwaves, this project aims to revisit the measurement of labor productivity through a disability justice lens. By asking how understandings of disability - and normalcy - are tied to labor, the project will make the case for carefully measuring the impact of the vulnerability created by climate change on bodies that labor. Methods for this project will include surveys, in-depth semi-structured and structured interviews, and where possible, ethnographic observations. The project will contribute to emerging work on the relationship between climate change and disability by interrogating the effects of heat on labor through a critical, mixed methods lens. The broader impact of the project will be an ongoing conversation (in a range of different formats, including a podcast and a series of short blog pieces) that examine the (dis-)abling effects of climate change on laboring bodies.

OVERVIEW / RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How is the measurement of labor and productivity understood with/in/out a disability justice lens? How does climate policy make room for the experiences of presently and future disabled people and communities? How do the policies understand and produce a laboring body, disability and vulnerability? To answer these questions, this project will focus on two coastal sites in India, examining the impact that climate change has had on the lives of disabled people at these sites. In particular, the project will ask: what disabling effects of climate change have emerged? Does global and local policy find itself able to attend to - and account for - these challenges? What vulnerabilities do they create for a laboring body? In using a disability justice lens, the project also pushes back against the notion that access can be/is one specific or singular thing; rather, it attends to how access is a relational practice in disabled communities, and to what it means for access to continue to be re-negotiated through the impacts of climate change.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Recent work on climate change has discussed some of the ways in which climate change policy is often likely to leave disabled people behind, starting with the knowledge that many major climate change documents are not accessible. Attending to the effects of climate change on peoples’ bodies through a disability justice lens is a significant departure from a health and well-being lens, which often tends to locate the responsibility within the individual. Instead, a disability justice lens both allows for an attention both to systemic factors that are closely related to disability, as well as to sources of disability expertise that are essential to climate change responses.

Jasbir Puar uses a disability studies lens to theorize the concept of debilitation—which acts to suture Foucauldian biopolitics and Achille Mbembe’s necropolitics. Debilitation is the political condition of the state and authorities neither allowing life to flourish, nor actively killing it. Debilitation is a condition experienced by a majority of marginalized communities who are being debilitated by governance regimes. While Puar uses the example of Israeli intentionally maiming Palestinian rock throwers, but not killing them, as a political strategy, a similar logic could be applied to the bodies that labor under conditions of climate change that differentially maim bodies. In this view, slow death is the effect of climate change on vulnerable bodies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Background: The IPCC's Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability (<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>)

Analysis: So far, mostly newspaper articles, such as Olivia Shiva

(<https://www.stuff.co.nz/pou-tiaki/127919351/scant-mention-of-disabled-community-despite-higher-risk-of-climate-change-impact>)

King, Molly M., and Maria A. Gregg. "Disability and climate change: A critical realist model of climate justice." *Sociology Compass* 16, no. 1 (2022): e12954.

Kosanic, Aleksandra, Jan Petzold, Berta Martín-López, and Mialy Razanajatovo. "An inclusive future: disabled populations in the context of climate and environmental change." *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability* 55 (2022): 101159.

Pasek, Anne. "Low-Carbon Research: Building a Greener and More Inclusive Academy." *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society* 6 (2020): 34-38.

Pasek, Anne, Caleb Wellum, and Emily Roehl. Making and Meeting Online. *Energy Humanities*. October 6, 2020.

<https://www.energyhumanities.ca/news/making-and-meeting-online>

Stein, P.J., & Stein, M.A. (2022). Disability, Human Rights, and Climate Justice. *Human Rights Quarterly* 44(1), 81-110. doi:10.1353/hrq.2022.0003.

Contributions to topical literatures on disability justice, as well as possibly the environmental humanities

METHODS AND DATA RESOURCES

Although the proposal emphasizes ethnographic methods for this project, it is often the case that ethnographic work (at least as envisioned at North American universities) is thought of as a process of traveling to other spaces. This process is in turn carbon heavy as a method, and the aim of this project will be to attend to possibilities for lower carbon research, drawing in large part on existing research connections, online surveys, and potentially conducting further research remotely, including interviews. This project will also include archive ethnography, focusing particularly on existing climate policy documents, with an attention to how vulnerability is constructed and defined for disabled people and communities (if/when included).

For more on low-carbon research methods, see: <http://lowcarbonmethods.com/>

THEORETICAL FRAMES & DATA ANALYSIS

- Disability studies scholarship on the limits of vulnerability as a construct
 - Disability expertise (Dokumaci)
 - Disability anthropology (Hartblay)

Data analysis will be conducted alongside data collection, and will involve two rounds of coding the data to review emerging themes.

PLAN OF WORK

This project will be contingent upon funding.

CHALLENGES AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

One significant challenge will be making room for remote research amidst the many changes brought about by COVID-19 and the other impacts of climate change in the Global South. Therefore, in addition to IRB consent, ongoing consent for inclusion in the study (and any future publications) will be sought from participants.

VALIDITY AND EVALUATION

In addition to funder-related evaluation, the project will aim to make data from interviews and ethnographic observations (anonymized) available online, open source, so that others who wish to engage with this data for their own purposes may do so.

PREPARATION AND WORK THUS FAR

A pilot study for this survey will be conducted 3 - 6 months prior to the start of the full project. The researcher is working on an existing piece on low carbon methods.

DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN

All data will be stored on a secure server, and will be backed up on the researcher's computer. No one other than the researcher will have access to interview data.