

# NomosTextbook

Kropp | Sonnberger

# Environmental Sociology



**Nomos**

## NomosTextbook

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Cordula Kropp | Marco Sonnberger

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## Foreword

As we completed our work on the English version of this introduction to environmental sociology in October 2024, media reports were filled with news of escalating disasters. In Spain, torrential rains had just caused flash floods, resulting in more than 200 deaths, Australia saw its hottest September in record, with temperatures 3°C above the long-term average, causing health problems for both human and non-human beings. Globally, summer 2024 was the Earth's hottest on record, and in August 2024, the average land temperature in Europe was 1.57°C above the 1991-2020 average, according to the Copernicus Climate Change Service. In 2023, nature's carbon sink failed for the first time, with trees, plants and soil showing almost no net absorption of carbon dioxide emissions due to enormous forest fires and rising sea temperatures. In Canada alone, 6,623 wildland fires had burned more than 15 million hectares of managed forests. "We're seeing cracks in the resilience of the Earth's systems ... the oceans showing signs of instability"<sup>1</sup> said Johan Rockström, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, about these phenomena, which are not yet factored into climate models. Extreme weather events have already become part of our normality, and local governments around the world are urgently developing climate adaptation strategies to keep cities habitable. In each of these regions, institutions struggle to manage climate impacts, highlighting a troubling lack of preparedness and action capacity. At the same time, continuous updates of the planetary boundaries framework in Earth sciences' find that six of the nine boundaries are transgressed, "suggesting that Earth is now well outside of the safe operating space for humanity" (Richardson et al. 2023: 1). Now more than ever, future generations must confront the urgent task of reimagining lifestyles and economic practices, working towards their sustainable transformation. We believe that environmental sociology has a great deal to offer in this endeavor. This textbook is particularly relevant for students in social sciences—sociology, political and communication sciences, human geography, psychology—where an understanding of environmental sociology has become essential for a well-rounded education that meets today's needs.

With this in mind, we hope this English translation of our introduction to environmental sociology reaches a broad audience. Our goal is to provide students and other interested readers with a comprehensive overview of key theories and research in this essential field. The book offers a theoretical and thematic guide to the major issues and approaches in environmental sociology. While our coverage, based in Germany's long tradition in environmental sociology, is necessarily selective, we aim to present foundational theories alongside both classical and current research areas. To assist in learning, each chapter includes a brief introductory summary and a closing overview of the chapter's key points. Each chapter also provides a list of recommended readings with brief annotations. Designed to be suitable for use in both seminars and lectures, as well as for independent study, we hope the book serves as a valuable resource.

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1 Source: The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/oct/14/nature-carbon-sink-collap-se-global-heating-models-emissions-targets-evidence-aoe>, accessed on 31.10.2024.

We extend our gratitude to our colleagues at the Department of Technology, Risk and Environment at the University of Stuttgart and the Center for Interdisciplinary Risk and Innovation Research at the University of Stuttgart (ZIRIUS) for their insightful discussions and constructive feedback. We are grateful to work in such an inspiring environment! We thank the student assistants Hanna Sophie Mast, Lukas Günsh, Lena Ebersbach and Amelie Dresel for their invaluable help with proofreading and formatting both the German and English versions of the book. Our thanks also go to Alexander Hutzel, Eva Lang and Fabiola Valeri of Nomos Publishing for their assistance with the publication.

Munich/Stuttgart, October 2024

### **Cited literature:**

Richardson, K., W. Steffen, W. Lucht, J. Bendtsen, S.E. Cornell, J.F. Donges et al., 2023: Earth beyond six of nine planetary boundaries. *Science advances*, 9 (37): eadh2458.

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