
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Larissa Schneider is an Environmental Scientist interested in understanding the role of past climate changes and human activities on tropical and temperate ecosystems. Her research focuses on the geochemistry of freshwater lake sediments to reveal long-term interactions between humans, climate and metal contamination using the information stored in the bottom of lakes. This information sheds light on past climate changes, the role of human colonisation in the landscape, the magnitude of impacts from industry and other processes. She is the Founder and Convenor of the Mercury Australia (<http://www.mercury-australia.com.au>), a research network that unites researchers investigating the historical and contemporary uses and impacts of mercury and their implications for regulation and governance in the Southern Hemisphere, with special emphasis in the Asia and the Pacific.

Simon Avenell is a Professor in the School of Culture, History and Language. He specialises on modern Japanese history, civic activism, civil society, environmental history and transnational history. His work has been published in leading journals, including *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, *Science Technology and Society*, *Environmental History* and *Modern Asian Studies*. He has published two single-authored books: *Making Japanese Citizens: Civil Society and the Mythology of the Shimin in Postwar Japan* (UC Press, 2010), an expansive history of civic thought, social activism, and civil society in postwar Japan, and *Transnational Japan in the Global Environmental Movement* (Hawaii, 2017), which explores the contributions of Japanese activists in environmental movements worldwide from the 1960s onward. He is currently completing a third book on Japan's reengagement with Asia in wake of World War II.

Assa Doron is a Professor of Anthropology and South Asian Studies at the College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University. His main areas of interest include urban anthropology, development studies, media and public health. Much of his fieldwork was carried in Varanasi where he focused on the river and questions of identity politics and the environment. His study was published in the book, *Life on the Ganga: Boatmen and the Ritual Economy of Banaras* (Cambridge, 2013). His subsequent work on the media focused on the impact of the mobile phones on Indian society was published in a co-authored book with Robin Jeffrey, titled, *The Great Indian Phone Book* (Harvard, 2013). Most recently, he and Jeffrey co-authored the award-winning book, *Waste of a Nation: Garbage and Growth in India* (Harvard, 2018). He is currently working on problems of public health, pollution and antimicrobial resistance.

Research on pollution has been largely western-centric and scientifically driven to date. This special issue features critical social and cultural questions related to pollution, broadly conceived in environmental, social and cultural terms. It will approach a series of key questions surrounding the origins and consequences of pollution.

This special issue aims to leverage interdisciplinary research expertise on pollution to analyse and communicate the theoretical and analytical contributions on the topic to relevant fields, across anthropology, history, gender, media, public health and environmental studies. Contributing papers examine how pollution and polluting practices shape local communities and landscapes, influence cultures, and transform social relationships and society.

The authors of contributing papers are uniquely placed to debate the theme of pollution, a topic that requires a multi-disciplinary approach if it is to be understood in all its complexity. The contributors come from a range of disciplines (including HASS and STEM) and their papers deal with real-world urgent challenges that affect a range of societies. Of special interest is the discussion on the disproportionate exposure of vulnerable communities (particularly, the socio-economically disadvantaged) to pollution and the unequal effects on health and environment.

The subjects covered in this special issue include (but are not limited), to the following:

- modern pollutants
- emerging pollution
- minimising pollution
- cultural views on pollution
- history of pollution
- political perspectives on pollution.

We hope this special issue can illuminate the opportunities and challenges involved in rethinking pollution and environmental degradation and the implications this might have for public health, policy guidelines and practical solutions. To this end, we encourage more research to advance the topics of the papers contained herein, particularly with regards to the unique aspects of pollution in the emerging economies of Asia and the Pacific. We hope the papers will foster dialogue, promote the exchange ideas, and generate a productive discussion with authors of this special issue.

Finally, we note the sad passing of Professor Richard Vogt before these papers were published and dedicate this special issue to his memory.