



**2025 Annual Conference**  
Wednesday 23 - Friday 25 April  
University of Manchester



# PLENARY PANEL

FRIDAY 25 APRIL 2025  
13:30 - 15:00

## **SOCIOLOGISTS LIKE TO THINK THEY LEAD THE WAY ON SOCIAL JUSTICE. WHERE ARE THEY ON CLIMATE JUSTICE?**

**Benjamin Bowman**, Manchester Metropolitan University, **Rebecca Elliott**, London School of Economics, **Charles Ogunbode**, University of Nottingham, **Lisa Vanhala**, University College London, **Catherine Walker**, Newcastle University

Chaired by Mark Doidge, University of Loughborough, BSA Membership Trustee

In her presidential address to the American Sociological Association, Mary Romero (2020) argued that Sociology has engaged with social justice since the discipline's inception. At this BSA conference there will be many papers that address issues of marginalisation around class, race, gender, sexuality, (dis)ability, and other social justice issues. However, there is one that often gets overlooked: climate justice. There is a 'Strange silence of mainstream sociology' on climate change (Lever-Tracey 2008). Environmental sociology has sat at the margins of mainstream sociology since its emergence in the 1970s (Dunlap and Brulle 2015). At the same time Sociologists have also been marginalised from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (Urry 2015). Despite this, climate change is already having a devastating impact on the most marginalised in society. Those who have contributed the least to climate change will be those who will be most affected (Schlosberg and Collins 2014). This panel is a deliberate provocation and aims to address this lacuna.



**Benjamin Bowman**, a senior lecturer at the Manchester Centre for Youth Studies, Manchester Metropolitan University, is a specialist in young people's political sociology, and especially the sociology of climate change. He uses youth-centred and creative methods to explore how young people make sense of, and take action on, climate change. He is best known for Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) with young people on climate change, and for co-authorship, co-research and collaborative partnerships with young people on climate action, including at the international level with the Council of Europe, the European Commission and the British Council.

**Rebecca Elliott** is Associate Professor of Sociology at the London School of Economics and Political Science, where she is also affiliated with the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, the Centre for the Analysis of Risk and Regulation, and the Phelan United States Centre. Her research focuses on how climate change, as a material and symbolic phenomenon, reshapes social and environmental landscapes. She is the author of [\*Underwater: Loss, Flood Insurance, and the Moral Economy of Climate Change in the United States\*](#) (Columbia University Press, 2021). In addition to publishing in academic journals, she has contributed to *The New York Times*, *The Houston Chronicle*, and *Harper's Magazine*. She is one of the editors of the *British Journal of Sociology*.





**Charles Ogunbode** is an Assistant Professor in Applied Psychology at the University of Nottingham. His research addresses a range of topics relating to the roles of personal experiences, beliefs, and emotions individual and collective climate action, as well as how climate change impacts mental health and wellbeing around the world through biophysical, social, and perceptual pathways. In 2022, he led the first ever national survey of climate change experiences among people of colour conducted in the UK. Prior to joining the University of Nottingham, he completed a PhD in Psychology at the University of St Andrews and held positions at the University of Bergen and De Montfort University. He currently holds editorial positions with *Plos Mental Health*, *Global Environmental Psychology*, and *Personality and Individual Differences*.

**Lisa Vanhala** is Pro-Vice Provost for the Grand Challenge Theme of the Climate Crisis and a Professor of Political Science at University College London. Her research sits at the intersection of political science, law and sociology. She studies the development and mobilization of law in the fields of climate change and human rights. She also teaches and writes about qualitative research methods. Her current research focuses on the policies and politics of climate change loss and damage from the UN to the local level. She has two forthcoming books, a monograph entitled [\*Governing the End: The Making of Climate Change Loss and Damage\*](#) (University of Chicago Press), and a co-edited volume entitled [\*Governing Climate Change Loss and Damage: The National Turn\*](#) (Cambridge University Press). In 2023 she also co-edited a special issue of the journal *Global Environmental Politics* on the politics of climate change loss and damage. Her work has been funded by the ESRC, the British Academy and the European Research Council. She also regularly acts as a consultant or advisor for UN agencies, philanthropic foundations and non-governmental organisations. She sits on the editorial boards of *Law & Society Review*, *Law & Policy* and *Environmental Politics*.



**Catherine Walker** is an interdisciplinary social scientist based at Newcastle University as a Newcastle University Academic Track (NUAcT) fellow. Her research straddles human geography, sociology and environmental politics. Most of her research has to do with young people, climate change and the environment, extending into environmental education, cultural identity and critical geographies of sustainability (how ideas about sustainability are culturally and spatially located, and how they travel). The aim of her NUAcT Fellowship is to explore the potential for climate justice – as both an agenda for action and a way of understanding inequalities – to galvanise youth and intergenerational responses to climate change as a past, present and future concern. Catherine is a co-author of [\*Environment in the Lives of Children and Families: Perspectives from India and the UK\*](#) (Policy Press), as well as [\*Young People at a Crossroads\*](#), a creative resource for educators that presents reflections on climate change

education from migrant-background young people in the UK and Australia. Catherine recently guest co-edited a special issue of [\*Geographical Research\*](#) on storytelling as a pedagogic resource to build intergenerational and global solidarity in the face of climate change.



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