

# Envisioning Sustainabilities



# Envisioning Sustainabilities:

*Towards an Anthropology  
of Sustainability*

Edited by

Fiona Murphy and Pierre McDonagh

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FM and PM, July 2016



# INTRODUCTION

FIONA MURPHY AND PIERRE MCDONAGH

We owe it to ourselves and to our interlocutors to say loudly that we have seen alternative visions of humankind—indeed more than any academic discipline—and that we know that this one . . . that constructs economic growth as the ultimate human value . . . may not be the most respectful of the planet we share, nor indeed the most accurate nor the most practical. We also owe it to ourselves to say that it is not the most beautiful nor the most optimistic.

—Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Global Transformations* 2003:139.

The guiding inspiration of this book is to explore the important contribution that social scientific research on sustainability can make to sustainability science- as a whole. The contributors in this book are in the main anthropologists-with one contribution from a political scientist and one from a sociologist. Our contributors work in both academic and applied contexts, thereby bringing with them a wealth of diverse geographic, practical and theoretical expertise. The two co-editors come from both an anthropological and critical marketing background, thus positioning the collection in an interdisciplinary frame. Sustainability, the key focus of this collection, is a concept with a diverse array of meanings, anchored most firmly within issues connected to the natural environment. Within its widespread application in the world of business, governmental policy and the development world: its underlying principles and definitions often prove nebulous and sometimes even conflicting; it is reduced to the social, ecological and economic as a triple bottom line in business circles. In the current climate of global crisis and indeed, recovery, the question of how sustainable lifestyles, communities, and businesses can be characterized is at the root of much debate. If, as Charles Redman (2011) has recently proclaimed, anthropology should be seen as key to the development of sustainable science, then how should anthropology respond to this provocation?

This collection thus interrogates the evolution of ‘*sustainability imaginaries*’ in contexts as varied as urban planning, community gardens, bread-making, sustainable food movements in Italy, applied projects such

as water projects in Bangladesh, and disaster studies (such as our example from Bulgaria on foot and mouth disease). Anthropology, and especially ethnography, are particularly well placed to proffer an understanding of the changing role of sustainability practices. An anthropology of sustainability, we believe, may well collapse facile divisions between academic and applied contexts, as well as, in this age of silo busting, facilitate greater dialogue between disciplines, for sustainability as a topic of study can only be an interdisciplinary one.

For its part, anthropology has a very long relationship with thinking about the environment accompanied by a rich literature (too numerous to list here) which, has led easily to the development of an anthropology of sustainability. A large number of anthropological monographs addressing the challenge of (in particular) environmental sustainability (see Milton 2002; Tsing 2005) exist. A rich history of practical, applied work on sustainability also exists within anthropology as a number of the contributors in this volume attest to.

In moving towards ‘an anthropology of sustainability’ (AoS), the contributors herein mark out a space to reconsider how ethnography can be an important tool on the path to understanding patterns and discourses of sustainability. Throughout this volume, various contributors map out some of the debates around the changing nature of ethnographic practice and attempt to reconceive its relationship to the study of sustainability. This kind of engagement is certainly not easy or assured, and there are complexities in conducting any ‘ethnography of sustainability,’ which our contributors highlight. It is notable too that this volume should be read in conjunction with the myriad of work already collated in the area of ecological or environmental anthropology.

What is to be learned then from the many encounters contained in this book? AoS seeks to contribute in manifold ways to the larger sustainability project, both academic and applied. Given notions of materialism, belief, perception, and values are at the core of the sustainability vision, anthropology as a discipline is particularly well placed to explore the challenges encountered by the sustainability movement. Further, applied anthropology, we submit, can and should be central to the implementation of many of these ideas. With such a project in mind, the editors of this book organised a panel at the 2013 International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) conference at the University of Manchester. Our panel entitled ‘Towards an Anthropology of Sustainability,’ gathered together a range of voices interested in contributing to a discussion on the relationship between the social sciences and sustainability studies. Our aims were modest, we were seeking simply to implement a more grounded

and focused conversation on the value of anthropology, and more broadly, the social sciences in making real, valuable and practical contributions to what is one of the most urgent issues of contemporary times-the sustainability crisis. Our questions were simple and posed in exact terms. We wanted to very specifically investigate what anthropology offers to an interdisciplinary study of sustainability? In sum, what methods, concepts and applications work best in various research and field contexts- and how these engagements challenge anthropology as a discipline and the social sciences as a field of thought. We saw our panel as contributing to and checking the burgeoning body of interdisciplinary work examining the impact of anthropologies of sustainability on environmental injustices and the everyday of the contemporary world in the context of the climate change crisis. Further, this collection addresses the old divides between applied and academic anthropology in important ways (see- in particular- Suzanne Hanchett- this volume).

One aim in this book is to give a taste of the kind of work going on and the impressions this work is making, indeed, to do otherwise would be an encyclopedic endeavor- beyond the scope of this project. In this respect, the contributions in this volume combine to form a kind of “self-conscious ethnography” (Burton 2005:6) of sustainability in diverse geographical contexts. We want to stress that we are in some ways looking to anthropology to provide at least some answers to the urgent issues of climate change and community building during the reign of austerity. We accomplish this by asking specific scholars to delineate both their research practices as well as how they envision the relationship of anthropology to sustainability studies. For AoS to have value in the larger study of sustainability, it must learn to respond to the puzzles and pressures that climate change and economic crisis engender. The question of temporality also figures within this –addressing climate change is an urgent issue, one that requires speed and clarity, ethnographic research often takes long periods of time in order to get it ‘right.’

What we present in this book is then a set of questions to stimulate further reflections on what kind of role AoS can play. In a globalised Europe, where crisis has become deeply anchored in discourses of loss, failure, and indeed, nostalgia, little research has been conducted on how sustainability practices (across different sectors) have been challenged or altered by economic austerity. While a general sense of disenchantment and malaise is part of the current zeitgeist, so too is the theme of recovery and sustainable lifestyles. Many of the chapters in this panel were researched and written in a moment when austerity policies figured large in public experience and debate. Amongst these debates, questions of well-

being (societal and individual), of what constitutes a ‘good life’ (Skidelsky and Skidelsky 2012) and how this can be achieved, and environmental-sustainability politics figure large. A number of the contributions reflect these debates capturing thus an important moment in European cultural history and politics.

A rush to theorize the relations between anthropology and sustainability might ultimately lead to an overstatement of how such an engagement can lead to addressing some of the most urgent issues attached to climate change. We therefore see this collection as the opening up of an important conversation, embracing the knowledge of how collaboration and interdisciplinarity are key to the future of both anthropology and sustainability studies. This opening up is still required to avoid premature evaluation of the challenges at hand. Žizek (2011) has declared humanity is in denial as it lives in the ‘end times,’ which one would expect should propel anthropology into action. The chapters contained herein evince the view that sustainability issues exist across a broad range of societal issues as diverse as bread-making projects and urban planning. Herein, we provide an account of the complexities of ethnographic research practice, on the scale and application of AoS, and finally, how an anthropology of sustainability can in some ways be constructed as a moral anthropology. Finally, we give a brief account of how the chapters figure within the larger conversation to which we contribute. We note the chapters cannot necessarily be organised according to all of the themes we deal with here—rather they overlap and interconnect in myriad ways.

### **Mapping the Field of ‘Sustainabilities’**

One of the earliest definitions of sustainable development originated in the UN Brundtland commission, in a report called *Our Common Future* in 1987. It defined sustainable development as—“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. A number of the chapters in this collection engage with or debate the Brundtland commission’s definition. While it is a definition widely lauded, many have critiqued these earlier visions of sustainability as eliding the importance of the social and over-emphasising the role of economic development. Of late, McDonagh, Dobsha and Prothero (2012), elucidate the evolution towards Sustainable Consumption & Production (SC&P), which offers a more rounded understanding of the challenge. SC&P is taken from the United Nations Environment Programme (2009:8) to be, “the use of services and related products, which respond to basic needs and bring a

better quality of life while minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as the emissions of waste pollutants over the life cycle of the service product so as not to jeopardize the needs of further generations". We see from this collection that we have moved very far away from earlier definitions with the role of the social, society, and everyday life-worlds playing a much more profound role similar to the UNEP definition for SC&P.

A vision of 'sustainability' and sustainable behaviour is widely utilised in both the corporate and consumer's imaginary in a European and indeed, global context. Sustainability has become, we suggest, the connective tissue between ideas of responsibility, rationality, value, and ethics, all embedded in broader concerns for the future of the world in which we live. These concerns amongst others are embedded in the chapters in this book. Sustainability, as McDonough and Braungart (2010), posit is indeed the latest manifestation of a modernity seeking new modalities of competitive advantage and forms of economic growth through the demand for green technologies, green finance and other kinds of green products. Sustainability exists as a new paradigm for economic expansion (or sustainable capitalism). Corporations have become concerned with notions of sustainability models, with large companies such as INTEL and IBM recently launching 'sustainable' or 'smart' cities projects in London and Dublin. In some regions attempts have been made to reconfigure conflicting and complimentary voices in sustainability discourse (see SustaiNext EU 2012, where industry and education joined with policy makers and environmental non-government organisations to debate what is to be done to enable a green economy). Whether it is possible to see some domain of shared logic within these sustainability projects and networks, remains an important question, which we argue, ethnography as method and anthropology as analysis, is particularly well placed to answer. Our contributors debate the layered multivalent nature of the 'sustainability project' across diverse geographic regions, thus making an important statement on the existence of multiple 'sustainabilities'. This echoes earlier critiques in sociology on the meaning of nature (see Murphy 1994; 1995) and also early attempts to map the complexity of Green Organisations and Management (see McDonagh and Prothero 1997).

How we begin to map out and understand the intersecting lineaments of sustainability and anthropology's role within this is an important challenge, one we begin to address in this collection. The backdrop to these debates is a humanity and literature steeped in conflict, some of which views sustainability projects as part of a larger movement towards reflexive modernization in late-modern risk society (Beck 1992), a rational

response to globalization and a growing body of knowledge about the “consequences of modernity” (Giddens 1990). Kilbourne, McDonagh, and Prothero (1997) bring this further with their claims that ideas of sustainable consumption prove a challenge to the dominant social paradigm. Other scholars construct sustainability discourse as a reflection and acceptance of neoliberal, market based policies, which engenders little more than ‘elitist environmental submarkets and lifestyles’ (Paavola 2001: 244). As such the literature is permeated with an enduring suspicion which both masks and reveals the dynamics of power and responsibility embedded in sustainability projects, whether at individual, community, corporate or governmental level. This seeming ambiguity embedded within the project or projects of sustainability is undoubtedly a source of cleavage for the ethnographer attempting to address sustainability measures. Ambiguity serves a purpose when polysemy and competing views of reality are to be embraced to envision new or untapped potential for ideas, ideals, tragic historic events or disaster. We therefore position this collection as a space attempting to converse with these ambiguities in such a way as to argue the case for a solid sub-discipline such as an anthropology of sustainability.

### **Constructing an Ethnography of ‘Sustainabilities’**

The challenges of conducting any ‘ethnography of sustainability’ are dealt with by a number of contributors in this volume (see especially- McCabe and Woodcraft- this volume). Conducting and writing any ethnography of ‘sustainabilities’ is then a particular craft wherein the nexus between personal, ethical, moral, academic and applied viewpoints inheres. Many of the contributors in this book deploy a range of methods, some advocating for a mixed methods approach due to the scale of sustainability projects. Other contributors draw on the ‘auto-ethnographic’ to think through sustainability (see especially- chapter five). Researching sustainability from an anthropological perspective calls for, to some degree, a rethinking of traditional ethnographic methods.

The creative tensions in the project of ethnography and more widely, anthropology have been well documented (Marcus 1998; 1995; Marcus and Fischer 2009; Vered Amit 2000). Fieldwork and how we conceive of ethnography has greatly evolved, wrought by new research contexts and changing realities and definitions of ethnography. While fetishised both within and outside the discipline of anthropology (see especially its increased use in corporate settings), ethnography, we argue, as a contact zone or sustained encounter with modalities of worldviews, value systems,

and beliefs (the list is long) is a methodology that can provide key insights into the issue of sustainability. If a 'sustainability conscience' (and indeed, values, motives) is located somewhere in the interstices of the everyday, then this is where ethnography operates best, uncovering and engaging with the unseen, the unacknowledged, the yet to come, and wedding it to the known, the presumed and the taken for granted in order to create new forms of understanding. Since sustainability discourses exist across a range of varied spaces, they are forged with different kinds of emphases, wherein we find differing ethics and politics at play. The chapters in this book also provide important comparative material in understanding how variant sustainability policies and politics manifest and have impact.

Sustainability as a term and mode of being seems to find itself reinterpreted at any given moment across these sometimes-conflicting spheres. Whether then it exists in the form of soteriology (the technology will save us) (in the movement towards smart and sustainable cities), or as a form of market environmentalism (in the space of CSR and trading policies), or in the community garden, where individuals attempt to evolve a world compatible with their green conscience (aspirations of slow food, reasserting the local), ethnography is a useful methodological being to shift between these layers. In a world where international organizations such as Amnesty International and the UN have instituted very specific programs addressing issues around a narrower vision of sustainable consumerism, we need to be cognizant of what kind of political action is being encouraged and where within this space the issue of responsibility lies. If we adhere to Lipsitz's (1998) argument that this focus on consumerism resituates and commoditizes political action, thereby allowing state devolution of responsibility, and more autonomy for industry in managing environmental impact and their sustainability measures, then alongside individual consumers, we need to address larger structural issues (see Kilbourne et al. 1997).

Ethnography and Anthropology as important research and analytical tools bring great value to the investigation and development of sustainability science. Indeed, Charles Redman (2011) points to this by positing that anthropology and its methods can be hugely helpful in developing a more coherent sustainability science, in both an academic and applied sense. He is also quick to point out that engaging with the very current issue of sustainability will reflect back on the development and positioning of anthropology within the broader context of academia. Redman's conviction emerges out of a belief that anthropology through its long relationship to notions of value and belief should allow us to find a route to combine value and science. He argues:

We all get, as anthropologists, that it takes lots of different ways to understand why people do what they do and what they're like. The past, the present, the biology, the language—we've always understood that a variety of lines of evidence can help enrich our understanding of something. This is a sustainability message too. We can't just invent a new hybrid car and not worry about who can use it and who can't. We can't just put a solar panel on a roof and think that we've saved the world. We need to look at it from all different directions and the impacts. Anthropology is a natural for that. In sustainability, what we have to get across is that there are not only multiple lines of information that we need to incorporate, but there are multiple ways of knowing the same information (Redman 2011: 1).

What Redman and other anthropologists (see Minnegal 2004) are debating (for both applied and academic anthropologies) is the need to move beyond the simple statement that anthropology has a lot to offer sustainability science (or indeed a number of other research contexts) and to begin to engage with what are and continue to be the barriers to communicating ethnographic discoveries and anthropological analyses to different disciplines and audiences. In a collection of papers on this very topic entitled *Sustainable Environments-Communities: Potential dialogues between anthropologists, scientists and managers* (2004) a number of anthropologists working in the area of sustainability and environmental management in Australian contexts argue to varying degrees that the anthropologist must find a meta language with which to communicate anthropological insights (see Minnegal 2004). Equally, anthropologists must employ the tools of anthropology itself to learn how to communicate with and to the science world (see Minnegal 2004). For some scholars then, anthropologists must learn to be translators, the conduit between oppositional worldviews (see Minnegal 2004), and yet others see the anthropologist as an initiator –as providing the catalyst for different kinds of exchanges between local people, communities, scientists and broader society (see Minnegal 2004). In sum, then, we believe that the ethnographer is well placed to facilitate a rapprochement between different disciplines and worldviews, one that through collaboration and co-creation can engender a space to further important conversations. It is within these debates that a notion of rethinking the scale and form of ethnography crystallizes, indeed, a larger debate well beyond the scope of this particular collection.

We believe (categorically) that AoS requires a *tempo adagio* fashioned through a reimagining of the scale and scope of ethnographic practice. Confronted (and stifled) by a surfeit of 'speed,' the sustainability movement requires the emergence of a repository of socio- cultural/

political/economic and scientific interconnections, which can be embedded in the weave of individual lives and social worlds. What this means for an ethnographic examination of this process, is a *more* not less complex form of research practice. This is, however, an ethnographic practice that is in the same moment confronted by the urgency with which we need to address some of the more pressing problems attached to ‘sustainability,’ in particular climate change.

In *Designs for an Anthropology of the Contemporary*, Faubion et al. (2008) point to a number of ethnographies such as work by Kim Fortun (2001), Adriana Petryna (2002), and Anna Tsing (2005) as examples of texts that are reflective of a ‘new ethnography’ confronted by assemblages (Deleuze and Guattari 1997) and unwieldy structures of temporality. Tsing writes:

In these times of heightened attention to the space and scale of human undertakings, economic projects cannot limit themselves to conjuring at different scales—they must conjure the scales themselves. In a sense, a project that makes us imagine globality in order to see how it might succeed is one kind of ‘scale making project;’ similarly projects that make us imagine locality, or space of regions or nations, in order to see their success are also scale-making projects. In a world of multiple, divergent claims about scales, including multiple divergent globalism, those global worlds that most affect us are those that manage tentatively productive linkages with other scale making projects. (Tsing 2005: 36)

Alongside Tsing, we argue for AoS that is in fact a ‘scale making project,’ one that espouses the multiplicity, hybridity, and indeed, uncertainty of sustainability discourses and forms. Pivotal to this should be an understanding that sustainability projects are also scale-making projects in and of themselves. So, in accessing them as research objects we are also accessing the politics of sustainability scales as they are imagined and practiced. Imaginaries of sustainability or ‘sustainabilities,’ while divergent, often have at their core (and as a point of intersection), an ambition to make universal or global the desire for ‘sustainability.’ This is one of Anna Tsing’s concerns within her theory of ‘scale making,’ how to imprint particular scales in universal form for people inhabiting different kinds of scales. When different scales engage and negotiate with one another, the force of ‘friction’ is attenuated and some form of consensus is arrived at.

Hanchett’s chapter asks us to reconsider concepts such as “social sustainability,” “sustainable livelihoods,” “vulnerability,” and “resilience” while Tzaneva reflects on the disaster of foot and mouth disease for Bulgarian culture in terms of ‘coping’ and ‘adapting’ while McCabe talks

of sustainability through a lens constructed from local meaning, history and social relations in New York and Belfast. Corcoran also charts the upsurge of Urban Agriculture across Europe and questions how this can serve the common good while Savova recalls collective bread making in Bulgaria. Such works underscore the need to acknowledge that it will be increasingly difficult to effect one singular notion of sustainability across regions of the globe.

While there is a wide theorization of the notion of scale making in geography (see for example Richard Howitt 1993), we have yet to fully embrace this idea within new attempts to redefine ethnographic practice. Embracing the politics of scale within ethnographic practice challenges not only how we conceive of ethnography but also how we do ethnography. Traditionally imagined as a lone researcher, the ethnographer worked in a particular setting on a singular topic and translated such work into a single authored ethnography. If we are to engage the notion of scale making in a world where (as with the work of Tsing 2007) the temporalities of our projects ‘threaten to outrun’ us (Faubion et al 2008)), then we have to shift into a more collaborative space, where working as part of a research team allows us to engage the politics of scale. An ethnography of ‘sustainabilities,’ then, with its attendant complexities calls on us to critically engage (as a scale making exercise) the permutations and formations of what Tsing (2007) calls ‘encounters across difference.’ A number of the authors in this book implicitly recognize this fact-working on large scale comparative research projects- which attempt to grasp the workings of sustainability at different scales. The work of Mary Corcoran on community gardens (see chapter nine) is an excellent example of this.

In a world where Ikea is building its own sustainable town, where INTEL and IBM have ambitious, smart and sustainable city projects; where policy experts, leading scholars, and industry specialists struggle to mark out a terrain for sustainability models and policies, the challenge of an ethnography of sustainability is to speak between fields of experience and domains of knowledge. Ethnography can accommodate different scales of experience, scales that are brought into being, ‘proposed practiced, and evaded’ (Tsing 2005: 58). Further, it is just such a project that ethnographers themselves must engage, moving from our local area of expertise through national frames to the globally scaled projects such as those funded by the European Union.

## **An Anthropology of Sustainability as Moral Optimism?**

Michel Rolph Trouillet claims that:

At the end of the day, in this age where futures are murky and utopias mere reminders of a lost innocence, we need to fall back on the moral optimism that has been anthropology's greatest –yet underscored–appeal...We need to assume this optimism because the alternatives are lousy, and because anthropology is the best venue through which the West can show an undying faith in the richness and variability of human kind. (2003:139).

Herein, we construct AoS as a form of moral optimism, this is not to say that this is not a critical anthropology, but rather one that foregrounds a humanistic approach to sustainability in a putative risk society. So what is it that AoS constructed as a form of moral optimism can offer sustainability science? We suggest, as do the many of these chapters, that AoS anchored in moral optimism recasts sustainability science, as one which embraces human behaviour in its entirety, in order to fully progress the visions and end goals of the sustainability project. While not a panacea to the challenges of sustainability, it certainly extends the depth and breadth of sustainability science beyond its current incarnation. In a time where economic crisis, austerity, environmental disasters and climate change have generated such global disaffection–can such AoS bring about and encourage societal hope through scholarly and policy application? What kinds of societal hope can be generated if we make a claim to moral optimism in a context where sustainability imaginaries are really only partial, fragmented, and certainly not fully connected– as evidenced by the chapters in this book. Anna Tsing reminds us that, "Hope is most important when things are going badly in the world; in the face of almost certain destruction, hope is a Gramscian optimism of the will. Such "unrealistic" hope begins in considering the possibility that tiny cracks might yet break open the dam"(2005:267). AoS, as our contributors evince in their varying analyses, thus confronts how everyday settings and approaches to sustainability are being recast by human actors. Not without conflict, these evolutions of sustainability point to the uncertainty embedded in how sustainability 'actors' are producing and executing sustainability projects. Nonetheless, this is a fully human recasting of sustainability, one which our social scientific readings in this volume attest to as being wholly embracing of the complexity of sustainability.

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Among the chapters that follow we find a lively debate on the conditions of possibility for a conversation between AoS and sustainability science. At the centre of the debate we find a project coeval with anthropological thinking. It is not our intention here to give a summary of each chapter; rather, we offer some signposts by tracing how each contributor builds their relationship to sustainability studies.

At the end of this volume, Professor Pat Brereton of the School of Communications, Dublin City University joins us to give a detailed analysis of the chapters through a reflection which can be read after or in conjunction with the various sections of this collection. A fascinatingly varied picture of the relationship between sustainability and anthropology emerges in this volume as each author sustains a different kind of relationship to the project of sustainability. These relationships seem to be shaped not only by the kind of intellectual puzzles that might arise in a scholar's study as he reflects on how sustainability is imagined and engaged with but by a deep inhabiting of the ethnographic project. Two of our contributors come from political science and sociology, and the remainder anthropology, but all evoke the rich texture of the everyday in their analyses of sustainability. Many of the contributors evince ethnographic sensibilities formed through deep immersion in fieldwork or their own lives. Each of the chapters allows for the interplay of the textures, tones, and voices of sustainability actors, thus their originality lies in the deepening of our understanding of how anthropology can contribute to sustainability science. Many of the themes in the chapters overlap, so while we have demarcated significant sections, the essays all interrelate in quite significant ways.

The first section of this book is entitled *New Modalities of Sustainability* and opens with a chapter by Suzanne Hanchett called '*Social Dynamics and Sustainability: Some Anthropological Insights.*' This chapter is an excellent frame for the book as a whole presenting an insightful reading of the evolution and relationship of sustainability studies to anthropology, and more broadly, the social sciences. Further to this, Hanchett shows how such AoS can be rigorously applied in a challenging setting such as a water resources management project in Bangladesh. Next, we hear from Gregor Claus, whose chapter '*Why we need a different socio-economic system for a just, sustainable society: Sustainability as an implication of Social justice,*' is a chapter that also offers a well-rounded unpacking of how sustainability thinking has evolved. Claus brings his own position to this asking the reader to consider the usefulness of Rawl's theory in thinking through how we can achieve a just and sustainable society. His premise is one that unfolds well with the ethnographic rigour of the

chapters and analyses that follow. The final chapter in this section entitled *'Emerging Spheres of Resonance: "Clandestinely Genuine" Food Networks and the Challenges of Governing Sustainability in Italy'* by Alexander Koensler brings a strong ethnographic close to this section. Through the window of ethnographic research conducted on the changing relationship to sustainability and food production and ownership in Italy, he marks out a space to consider how successful grassroots political mobilization around food production can truly be.

Our next section *'Sustainability in Practice'* highlights how effective applied sustainability projects anchored in the social sciences can be. As such, the chapters in this section showcase some of our key intentions in putting this edited collection together, and particularly, in how AoS can infuse the practicalities and implementation of real world sustainability projects in all sorts of contexts. The opening chapter in this section is by Anja Salzer (et al.) entitled *'Transforming Sustainability into action: Challenges of an interdisciplinary project with multi-ethnic actors in the South Caucasus/Georgia.'* this piece outlines the life of an interdisciplinary project on "Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Mountain Grassland in the Javakheti Highland, South Caucasus, Georgia." Much of our argument herein is centred on the call for a functional sustainability to move towards a true interdisciplinarity, and Salzer et al. show the challenges of doing just this. The chapter indicates the difficulties of translating these ideals into an authentically applied project while emphasising the urgency of needing to reflect and devise solutions to these very issues-this too is central to the concerns of this edited collection. The second chapter in this section is entitled, *'BREAD: Bridging Resources for Ecological and Art-Based Development is enlivened by the presence of the auto-ethnographic'* by Savova. Savova writes with heart about a project that is deeply personal, one with important professional and applied outputs. This is a chapter that interweaves the personal, the ethnographic, the theoretical, and the applied with aplomb. Speaking about developing a project focused on bread-making as a form of community building, this chapter shows firmly how ecological and arts-based development projects can truly contribute to bridging gaps of many kinds, and this is a sustainability project imagined as a form of reconciliation. The final chapter in this section is by Elya Tzaneva –entitled-*'Bulgarian Traditional Ecological Knowledge as Adaptive Strategy,'* it focuses on the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in South East Bulgaria in 2010 and 2011. This chapter shows how anthropological readings of sustainability can greatly contribute to our understandings of disaster situations and their engendering of individual and collective trauma. Tzaneva as such through

an anthropological lens brings voice to the humanity behind a disaster such as Foot and Mouth disease.

The final section of this book entitled *Towards an Urban Sustainability* emphasises the urgent need to consider the place of sustainability projects in an increasingly urbanised world. In a world victim to widespread global economic crisis, growing unemployment and poverty levels, sustainability can present real solutions to enriching the everyday lives of people subject to such conditions. Community gardens, sustainable architecture, greening the city- all present pathways to ameliorating and combatting the increasingly difficult life-worlds of people caught in the poverty trap, and the chapters in this section present illuminating arguments as to why we need to pay more attention to these projects. Rebekah McCabe's chapter '*Restoring Nature, Renewing the City: Local Narratives and Global Perspectives on Urban Sustainability*,' brings a refreshing comparative angle to this discussion, comparing two greening projects in very different contexts-Belfast and New York. McCabe's chapter moves seamlessly from state-led discussions on sustainability to the ways in which community activists interpret and implement sustainability- all within a strong ethnographic frame. The poeticism and perils of sustainable place making figure large in McCabe's chapter which brings us neatly to Saffron Woodcraft's chapter entitled '*Urban Translators: The role of anthropologists in sustainable urban planning*'. Woodcraft's focus is on the need for anthropologists to pay better attention to the spatial aspects of sustainable urban planning by introducing anthropological critique to develop more efficiently (indeed, more wholly) a social sustainability. Woodcraft thus echoes our call to heed what applied anthropological sustainability projects might bring to this overall goal. The final chapter in this section is Mary Corcoran's '*Rurs in urbs (re-visited): European urban agriculture in the age of austerity*.' Corcoran a sociologist using visual and ethnographic methods and working on a large EU project on community gardens brings a fitting close to our book by drawing out the significance of the growth of community gardening right across Europe to the backdrop of economic crisis and austerity. What is core in Corcoran's chapter is her claim that urban regeneration right across Europe is opening new spaces of potential in the public realm- Corcoran's claims are ultimately the claims of this book- that sustainability projects can be crucial to sustaining communities in times of dire need.

As editors of this volume, we alongside our contributors, hope you enjoy what we see as the beginning of an important conversation on what we believe to be a significant, impactful sub-discipline within anthropology – an anthropology of sustainability.

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