



Invisible Voices in the New Green Economy
12:00-1:00 PM, Monday, April 15
229 ILR Conference Center

Abstract

An increasing focus, globally, on sustainability and climate change has brought demands for a response from governments and corporations. Innovations in energy, transportation, communications, and urban and rural planning have the potential to create significant new jobs – but historically marginalized groups such as people with disabilities, immigrants, veterans, and indigenous populations are at risk of being excluded from these economic and workforce developments.

This topical lunch was proposed as a way to bring together an interdisciplinary group of scholars from across the Cornell campus who are interested in exploring the environmental and economic impact of these issues on these populations, whose voices have been minimally integrated into the discourse on sustainability. Starting from the connection between disability and sustainability (environmentally and economically), we are seeking to incorporate researchers who are working with a variety of populations that have struggled to make known the importance of their inclusion into the economy.

Host: Susanne Bruyère, ILR School, Employment and Disability Institute

Attendees: Rebakah Daro Minarchek (graduate student in Development Sociology); Wendy Wolford, Frank DiSalvo, Helene Schember, & Dave Dietrich, (Atkinson Center); Monica Touesnard and Mark Milstein (Johnson School, Center for Sustainable Global Enterprise); Sarah von Schrader & Thomas Golden, ILR School Employment and Disability Institute; Eric Cheyfitz (English and American Indian program); Karl Pillemer (College of Human Ecology, Department of Human Development, Director of the Center for Translational Research on Aging); Rod Howe (Cornell Cooperative Extension/CCE, and Community and Regional Development Institute/CarDI); Lucilene Danciguer (Fellow; Humphrey Fellowship); Jay Phillips (TST BOCES); Joe Zappala (ILR School, Assistant Dean of Communications and Marketing); Arnab Basu (Professor, CALS, AEM, Dyson School); Shelley Feldman (Professor, Development Sociology); Andrew Willford (Anthropology); Mary Jo Dudley (Development Sociology; Director, Cornell Farmworker Program).

Susanne Bruyère described progress towards this goal to date, including an initial literature review around issues of sustainability and vulnerable populations. As the purpose of the lunch was to locate commonalities across disciplines between researchers who work with traditionally marginalized groups, attendees were asked to introduce themselves and mention how their work intersected with sustainability concerns. Topics included the involvement of marginalized populations in planning for resource use, what part companies play in the process of economic development, fostering inclusion for all in the “green economy.” The question of defining “green jobs” and “green economy” was raised, and ways in which the interests of different groups are connected. Participants wondered about structural or epistemological connections between the populations of interest around which these conversations might be structured. The need to include perspectives of members of these marginalized groups in all parts of any such efforts was discussed.

Dr. Bruyère offered to assist in continuing this conversation moving forward, by scheduling another meeting in the fall to afford those interested an opportunity to discuss next steps.