

# DEBBIE BECHER

- 2011-present     Assistant Professor  
Department of Sociology, Barnard College, Columbia University
- 2010-11         Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Humanities  
Department of Sociology, Barnard College, Columbia University

## DEGREES

- 2009             Ph.D. in Sociology, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ  
Dissertation  
*Valuing Property: Eminent Domain for Urban Redevelopment, Philadelphia, 1992-2007*  
Paul DiMaggio (chair), Kim Scheppele, Viviana Zelizer, Hendrik Hartog, Wendell Pritchett
- 2005             M.A. in Sociology, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ  
General exams passed with distinction: Stratification and Inequality (Bruce Western),  
Political Sociology (Miguel Centeno), Race (Mitchell Duneier)
- 1991             B.A. in Mathematics, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA

## RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS

Economic Sociology     Urban Sociology     Social Theory  
Law and Society         Cultural Sociology

## FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

- 2009-10         *Visiting Scholar*, American Academy of Arts and Sciences  
Nationally competitive fellowship for public policy analysts, humanists, and social  
scientists who received their Ph.D. or J.D. within the last ten years. Awarded to eight  
scholars showing promise of becoming leaders in their field, especially those who work  
on multidisciplinary topics.
- 2008-09         *Research Fellow*, The Brookings Institution, Metropolitan Policy Program  
Nationally competitive resident fellowship awarded to five students completing  
policy-oriented dissertations.
- 2008-09         *American Fellow*, American Association of University Women (AAUW)  
Nationally competitive fellowship for 97 women writing dissertations in any field.
- 2007-08         *Graduate Prize*, American Studies, Princeton University  
Awarded to one advanced Princeton graduate student for excellent work on a  
dissertation in American Studies.
- 2006-08         *Fellow*, Society of Woodrow Wilson Scholars, Princeton University  
Competitive fellowship to join a multi-disciplinary society of Princeton social science  
students and faculty engaged in policy-relevant research.
- 2006-07         *Graduate Prize Fellowship*, Center for Human Values, Princeton University  
Fellowship given to eight Princeton graduate students in any discipline for dissertations  
that contribute to our understanding of ethics and human values.

- 2006 *Arthur Liman Fellowship*, Arthur Liman Public Interest Program, Yale Law/Princeton Fellowship given to two Princeton graduate students to support study of public interest law. First Ph.D. recipient.
- 2002-06 *Summer Fellowship*, Princeton University
- 2002-06 *Graduate Fellowship*, Princeton University

## GRANTS

- 2008 Horowitz Foundation for Social Policy, Research Grant for dissertation (\$3,000)
- 2007 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Doctoral Dissertation Research Grant (\$22,220)
- 2007 National Science Foundation Dissertation Improvement Grant, Law and Social Sciences (\$11,904)
- 2007 Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations Research Grant for: "Nonprofit Status in Government Partnerships: Niche, Symbol, or Signal?" (\$4,925)
- 2006 Global Network on Inequality Fellowship for: "The 'Land-grab law' in Valencia, Spain: Forcing Compensation for Benefit rather than Harm" (\$6,000)
- 2006 Dissertation Research Grant, Department of Sociology, Princeton University (\$1,000)
- 2006 Law and Society Association, Graduate Student Workshop (\$200)
- 2005 Policy Research Institute for the Region Dissertation Grant, Princeton University (\$10,000)

## PUBLICATIONS

- "Political Moments with Long-term Consequences" Forthcoming in *Remaking Urban Citizenship: Organizations, Institutions, and a Right to the City*. Eds. Michael Peter Smith and Michael McQuarrie. Volume 10 in Comparative Urban and Community Research. New Brunswick (U.S.A.) and London (U.K.): Transaction Publishers.
- "Uncertainty Planning: Lessons from Property Takings in Philadelphia" Forthcoming in *The City after Abandonment*. Eds. Margaret Dewar & June Thomas. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- "The Participant's Dilemma: Bringing Conflict and Representation Back In." 2010. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. 34(3) 496-511.
- "The Rights Behind Eminent Domain Fights: A Little Property and A Lot of Home." 2010. in *Property Rights and Neo-liberalism: Cultural Demands and Legal Actions*. Eds. Laura Hatcher and Wayne McIntosh. Ashgate Press. pp. 75-93.
- "Narrating and Naming Positive Agents: Storytelling by Philadelphia Postwar Political Elite." 2008. *Poetics*. 36(1) 72-93.
- "Government v. Property-owners? Eminent Domain Practice and Judgment, in and out of Court." 2006. *The Princeton Law Journal*. 1(1): 25-27.

## WORK IN PROGRESS

- "Embracing Race: Race as a Resource in Eminent-Domain Conflicts." Forthcoming in *Race and Real Estate*. Eds. Valerie Smith and Kim Lane Scheppele.

## **PRESENTATIONS**

The Bloustein Speaker Series, Rutgers University Edgar J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, March 2011. "Investing like a State: Political Culture and Property Takings."

Lectures in Planning Series, Urban Planning Program, Columbia University, February 2011. "Investing like a State: Political Culture and Property Takings."

Fordham Urban Law Journal Symposium, Taking New York: The Opportunities, Challenges, and Dangers Posed by the Use of Eminent Domain in New York. February 2011. Panel on Eminent Domain as a Means for Change.

American Sociological Association, Culture Section, Cultural Expressions of Neoliberalism. August 2010. "The Rights behind Eminent Domain Fights: A Little Property and A Lot of Home."

Law and Society Association, Panel "Origins of Rights," May 2010. "The Common Test Case: Rights Against Discrimination Meet Property Rights in Everyday Takings."

Harvard University Department of Sociology, Culture and Social Analysis Workshop, May 2010.

Boston University Department of Sociology, Workshop on Politics and Culture, April 2010.

Brown University Taubman Center for Public Policy, Brown Bag Series, March 2010.

Association for Law, Property, and Society, Annual Meeting, March 2010, "The Rights Behind Eminent Domain Fights: A Little Property and a Lot of Home."

Harvard University Department of Sociology, Urban Social Processes Workshop, "Order without Legibility," March 2010.

University of Wisconsin Law School Institute for Legal Studies, Faculty Workshop, February 2010, "The Investment State."

University of Wisconsin Department of Sociology, Politics, Culture, and Society Seminar, February 2010, "The Political and Moral Classification of Property Relations: The Case of Eminent Domain."

University of Arizona Department of Sociology, Friday Lunch Oratory Program *aka* "Brown Bag," October 2009, "A Moral Code in Property Politics."

American Sociological Association, Urban Sociology Section, August 2009. "Government Support of Growth in Whose Interest? Political and Economic Pragmatism Motivate the Use of Eminent Domain for Redevelopment."

American Sociological Association, Urban Sociology Section, August 2009. "The Participant's Dilemma: Bringing Conflict and Representation Back In."

Law and Society Association, Panel "Property Rights and Neo-liberalism," May 2009. "The Rights Behind Eminent Domain Fights: A Little Property and A Lot of Home."

Race and Real Estate, Conference Sponsored by the African American Studies Program and the Program in Law and Public Affairs, Princeton University, May 2009. "The Closed Boxes of Race and Property, The Open Box of Home: Struggles for 'Home' in Philadelphia Conflicts over Eminent Domain."

Urban Affairs Association, Annual Meeting, May 2009. "Valuing Property: Eminent Domain for Private Development, Philadelphia 1992-2007."

Brookings Institution, Metropolitan Policy Program, December 2008. "Valuing Property: Eminent Domain for Private Development, Philadelphia 1992-2007."

American Sociological Association, Political Sociology Section, August 2008. "The Third Way: How Private Negotiation Creates Government Legitimacy in Public Conflicts over Eminent Domain."

Law and Society Association, Panel “Matters More Weighty than *Kelo*,” May 2008. “Politics of Home: Eminent Domain and Negotiations of the Common Good along Philadelphia’s American Street.”

Society of Woodrow Wilson Fellows, Princeton University, February 2008. “Governments, Markets, and Valuing Property: Urban Government Legitimacy and Eminent Domain Philadelphia 2003-2007.”

Law-Engaged Graduate Students, Program in Law and Public Affairs, Princeton University, November 2007. “Sweet and Sour Procedural Justice.”

International Sociological Association, Research Committee 21 on Sociology of Urban and Regional Development’s Conference on Urban Justice and Sustainability, August 2007. “Hitting a Moving Target: Everyday Evaluations of Governments’ Growth Efforts.”

Society of Woodrow Wilson Fellows, Princeton University, April 2007. “Economic Development Arizona Property Security: Competing Interests in Eminent Domain Practice, Philadelphia, 1995-2005.”

Center for Human Values, Princeton University, Graduate Prize Seminar, March 2007. “No One Wants to be the Big Bad Wolf on American Street.”

Eastern Sociological Society, 2006. “The Gender of Volunteering: Networks and Expectations.”

Economic Sociology Workshop, Princeton University, October 2006. Discussant for “Double Accounting: The Dual Registers of Narrative Explanation and Monetary Compensation after the Moscow Theater Siege,” by Kim Lane Scheppele, Director of the Program of Law and Public Affairs, Professor of Sociology and Public Affairs, Princeton University.

Center for Human Values, Princeton University, Graduate Prize Seminar, October 2006. Discussant for “A Problem for Scanlon,” by Katie Gallagher, Ph.D. Candidate Politics.

Law Engaged Graduate Students, Program in Law and Public Affairs, Princeton University, April 2006. “Valuing Property: The Daily Life of Eminent Domain and Competing Interests in the State’s Relationship to Private Property.”

Normative Perspectives on Inequality, January 2006. Workshop organized by Bruce Western, Princeton University, Department of Sociology. Discussant for papers presented by Erik Olin Wright, Professor of Sociology, University of Wisconsin-Madison and Michael Burawoy, Professor of Sociology, University of California, Berkeley.

## **OTHER CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION**

Organizer, American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Panel on Social Policy, August 2011.

Chair, Adapting to Shrinkage in Germany and the United States, invited session at Shrinking Cities, Smaller Cities: Modern Crisis or New Path to Prosperity? Can Smaller be Better? Columbia University, October 2010.

Organizer, Law and Society Association Annual Meeting, Panel “Origins of Rights” May 2009.

## **AFFILIATIONS**

Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy, Columbia University

Urban Studies Program, Barnard College, Columbia University

## **TEACHING AND TRAINING EXPERIENCE**

2005            *Lead Teaching Assistant*, Miguel Centeno, *Western Way of War*, Department of Sociology, Princeton University. Coordinated six teaching assistants, managed audiovisual displays at bi-weekly class lectures, led weekly discussions on course readings, designed assignments, and graded written material.

- 2003-04 *Teaching Assistant, Mitchell Duneier, Race and Ethnicity, Department of Sociology, Princeton University. Led weekly precept discussions on course readings, designed assignments, and offered individual assistance.*
- 2002-04 *Statistics Tutor, Woodrow Wilson School of Public Policy, Princeton University. Provided individual and group instruction on social statistics to graduate econometrics students.*
- 1999-2002 *Community Development Instructor, PRO Neighborhoods, Tucson, Arizona. Developed and conducted monthly workshops for adult leaders and participants of grassroots organizations. Topics were designed around asset-based community building and requests from community members.*
- 1993-95 *Staff and Volunteer Training Coordinator, Tucson Centers for Women and Children, Tucson, Arizona. Developed and conducted six-week intensive crisis-response training for shelter workers. Developed and led one-day volunteer orientations for various positions.*
- 1991-92 *Life Skills Workshop Leader, New Beginnings Treatment Center, Tucson, Arizona. Taught monthly workshops for residents at community correctional facility on domestic violence, budgeting, and other daily-life issues.*

### **OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

- 1999-2002 *Community Development Project Associate, PRO Neighborhoods, Tucson, Arizona. Conducted outreach, research, facilitation, and training to support community asset-building. Managed grants to community groups. Directed evaluation and strategic planning.*
- 1997-2002 *Group Facilitator, Independent Consultant, Tucson, Arizona. Facilitated long-range planning and visioning for local groups on request.*
- 1996-99 *Project Development Coordinator, Rammed Earth Solar Homes, Tucson, Arizona. Supervised employees and subcontractors on construction of custom homes. Facilitated communication among customers, contractors, suppliers, and crews. Developed marketing, estimating, contracting, and management for contract work. General labor.*
- 1997-98 *Community Development Coordinator, Pima Youth Partnership, Tucson, Arizona. Mobilized neighborhood residents in strategies to increase leadership and success. Wrote successful federal grant for \$30,000. Coordinated innovative family-literacy program.*
- 1995-98 *Self-Employed, House Renovation Projects, Norfolk, VA and Tucson, Arizona, 1995-1998. Renovated two century-old homes. Performed budgeting, scheduling, and construction.*
- 1993-95 *Coordinator of Volunteers, Training, In-Kind Donations, Tucson Centers for Women and Children, Tucson, Arizona. Developed and maintained new volunteer program of over 400 volunteers. Designed and provided agency's staff and volunteer training. Created and managed operation of legal clinic and donation warehouse. Assisted in grant writing, fundraising, and public relations.*
- 1991-93 *Human Services Specialist, Tucson Centers for Women and Children, Tucson, Arizona. Performed counseling and case management for domestic violence shelter residents.*
- 1991-92 *Caseworker, New Beginnings Treatment Center, Tucson, Arizona. Maintained caseload of 14-16 adults in community correctional center. Led support groups.*

### **PROFESSIONAL SERVICE**

- Ongoing *Reviewer for City and Community and International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*
- 2010-11 *Member, Center for Research on Women, Advisory Board, Barnard College*

- 2010-11 *Faculty Mentor*, Undergraduate Research Program, Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy, Columbia University
- 2004-06 *Member*, Academic Affairs Committee, Graduate Student Government, Princeton University.
- 2004-05 *Graduate Student Member*, Diversity Committee, Department of Sociology, Princeton University.
- 2004-05 *Graduate Cohort Representative*, Graduate Student Advisory Committee, Department of Sociology, Princeton University.
- 2003-04 *Elected Representative*, Department of Sociology, Graduate Student Government, Princeton University.

## **SKILLS**

Language: English (native), Spanish (advanced), French (intermediate), German (intermediate)  
General contracting for residential new construction and renovation  
Small and large group strategic planning and meeting facilitation